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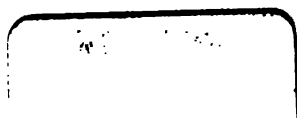
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The police came to the very edge of the rock. P. 42102

MATHIAS SANDORF
PART I.
THE
CONSPIRATORS OF TRIESTE

BY
JULES VERNE
AUTHOR OF "FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON," "ROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS,"
"THE VANISHED DIAMOND," ETC., ETC.

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vehicles as soon as they begin to climb the slopes of the Karst, are so laid out as to prevent their being enfladed by that terrible wind, the bora, which blows icily from the north-east. In this old town of Trieste, Zirone and Sarcany, the moneyless, found themselves more at home than among the richer quarters of the new.

It was, in fact, in the basement of a modest hotel not far from the church of Santa Maria Maggiore that they had lodged since their arrival in the Illyrian capital. But as the landlord, who remained unpaid, might become pressing as to his little bill, which grew larger from day to day, they sheered off from this dangerous shoal, crossed the square, and loitered for a few minutes near the Arco di Riccardo.

The study of Roman architecture did not prove very satisfying, and as nothing had turned up in the almost deserted streets, they began the ascent of the rough footpaths leading almost to the top of Karst, to the terrace of the cathedral.

"Curious idea to climb up here!" muttered Zirone, as he tightened his cape round his waist.

But he did not abandon his young companion, and away he went along the line of steps, called by courtesy roads, which lead up the slopes of the Karst. Ten minutes afterwards, hungrier and thirstier than ever, they reached the terrace.

From this elevated spot there is a magnificent view extending across the Gulf of Trieste to the open sea, including the port, with its fishing-boats passing and repassing, and its steamers and trading ships outward and homeward bound, and the whole of the town, with its suburbs and farthest houses clustering along the hills. The view had no charms for them! They were thinking of something very different, of the many times they had come here already to ponder on their misery! Zirone would have preferred a stroll along the rich shops of the Corso. Perhaps the luck might reach them here which they were so impatiently waiting for!

At the end of the steps leading on to the terrace near the Byzantine cathedral of Saint Just there was an enclosure, formerly a cemetery, and now a museum of antiquities. There were no tombs, but odds and ends of sepulchral stones lying in disorder under the lower branches of the trees—Roman stelæ, mediæval cippi, pieces of

MATHIAS SANDORF.

Part I.

THE CONSPIRATORS OF TRIESTE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CARRIER PIGEON.

TRIESTE, the capital of Illyria, consists of two towns of widely dissimilar aspect. One of them—Theresienstadt—is modern and well-to-do and squarely built along the shore of the bay from which the land it occupies has been reclaimed; the other is old and poor and irregular, straggling from the Corso up the slopes of the Karst, whose summit is crowned by the picturesque citadel.

The harbour is guarded by the mole of San Carlo, with the merchant shipping berthed alongside. On this mole there may at most times be seen—and very often in somewhat disquieting numbers—many a group of those houseless and homeless Bohemians whose clothes might well be destitute of pockets, considering that their owners never had, and to all appearance never will have, the wherewithal to put into them.

To-day, however—it is the 18th of May, 1867—two personages slightly better dressed than the rest are noticeable amongst the crowd. That they have ever suffered from a superabundance of florins or kreutzers is improbable, unless some lucky chance has favoured them—and they certainly look as though they would stick at nothing that might induce that chance to come.

One of them calls himself Sarcany, and says he hails from Tripoli. The other is a Sicilian, Zirone by name. Together they have strolled up and down the mole at least

"Listen, Zirone," answered Sarcany, knitting his brows ; "for the last time I tell you that there is nothing to be hoped for from Silas Toronthal."

"Are you sure of that ?"

"Yes, all the credit I have with him is exhausted, and to my last demands he gave me a definite refusal."

"That is bad."

"Very bad, but it is so."

"Good, if your credit is exhausted," continued Zirone, "it is because you have had the credit! And to what is that due? To your having many times placed your intelligence and zeal at the service of his firm in certain matters of delicacy. Now, during the first months of our stay in Trieste, Toronthal did not show himself too stingy in money matters. But it is impossible that there is not some way in which you have a hold over him, and by threatening him—"

"What was to be done has already been done," replied Sarcany, with a shrug of his shoulders ; "and you cannot go to him for a meal! No! I have no hold over him now ; but I may have and shall have, and when that day comes he shall pay me capital and compound interest for what he has refused me to-day! I fancy his business is under a cloud, and that he is mixed up in several doubtful things. Several of those failures in Germany, at Berlin and Munich, have had their effect in Trieste, and Silas Toronthal seemed rather upset when I saw him last. Let the water get troubled, and when it is troubled—"

"Quite so," exclaimed Zirone ; "but meanwhile we have only water to drink! Look here, Sarcany, I think you might try one more shot at Toronthal! You might tap his cash-box once more, and get enough out of it to pay our passage to Sicily by way of Malta."

"And what should we do in Sicily ?"

"That is my business. I know the country, and I can introduce you to a few Maltese, who are a very tough lot, and with them we might do something. If there is nothing to be done here, we might as well clear out, and let this wretched banker pay the cost. If you know anything about him, he would rather see you out of Trieste!"

Sarcany shook his head.

"You will see it cannot last much longer. We have *come to the end now*," added Zirone.

He rose and stamped on the ground with his foot, as if it were a stepmother unwilling to help him. At the instant he did so he caught sight of a pigeon feebly fluttering down just outside the enclosure. The pigeon's tired wings could hardly move, as slowly it sank to the ground.

Zirone, without asking himself to which of the hundred and seventy-seven species of pigeons now known to ornithological nomenclature the bird belonged, saw only one thing—that the species it belonged to was edible.

The bird was evidently exhausted. It had tried to settle on the cornice of the cathedral. Not being able to reach it, it had dropped on to the roof of the small niche which gave shelter to the statue of St. Just; but its feeble feet could not support it there, and it had slipped on to the capital of a ruined column.

Sarcany, silent and still, hardly followed the pigeon in its flight, but Zirone never lost sight of it. The bird came from the north. A long journey had reduced it to this state of exhaustion. Evidently it was bound for some more distant spot; for it immediately started to fly again, and the trajectory curve it traced in the air compelled it to make a fresh halt on one of the lower branches of the trees in the old cemetery.

Zirone resolved to catch it, and quietly ran off to the tree. He soon reached the gnarled trunk, climbed up it to the fork, and there waited motionless and mute, like a dog pointing at the game perched above his head.

The pigeon did not see him, and made another start; but its strength again failed it, and a few paces from the tree it fell into the grass.

To jump to the ground, stretch out his hands, and seize the bird was the work of an instant for the Sicilian. And quite naturally he was about to wring its neck, when he stopped, gave a shout of surprise, and ran back to Sarcany.

"A carrier-pigeon!" he said.

"Well, it is a carrier that has done its carrying," replied Sarcany.

"Perhaps so," said Zirone, "and all the worse for those who are waiting for the message."

"A message!" exclaimed Sarcany. "Wait, Zirone, wait! Give him a reprieve!"

And he stopped his companion, who had again caught hold of the neck. Then he took the tiny packet, opened it, and drew forth—a cryptogram.

The message contained only eighteen words, arranged in three vertical columns, and this is what it said :—

<i>ihnalz</i>	<i>zaczmn</i>	<i>rnioph</i>
<i>arnuro</i>	<i>truree</i>	<i>mtqssl</i>
<i>odxhnp</i>	<i>estlev</i>	<i>ccuart</i>
<i>aceeil</i>	<i>ennios</i>	<i>nouprvg</i>
<i>spesdr</i>	<i>erssur</i>	<i>ouitse</i>
<i>eedgnc</i>	<i>toeedt</i>	<i>artuce</i>

CHAPTER II.

THE PIGEON'S HOME.

THERE was nothing to show whence the message came, or whither it was being sent. Only these eighteen words, each composed of an equal number of letters. Could they be made into sense without the key? It was not very likely—unless by some very clever decipherer!

And yet the cryptogram could not be indecipherable!

The characters told him nothing, and Sarcany, who was at first much disappointed, stood perplexed. Did the message contain any important news, and, above all, was it of a compromising nature? Evidently the precautions had been taken to prevent its being read, if it fell into other hands than those for whom it was intended. To make use of neither the post nor the telegraph, but the extraordinary means of the carrier-pigeon, showed that it must refer to something it was desired to keep secret.

"Perhaps," said Sarcany, "there lies in these lines a mystery that will make our fortune."

"And then," answered Zirone, "this pigeon will represent the luck that we have been running after all the morning! And I was going to strangle it! Anyhow, it is important to keep the message, and we can cook the messenger."

"Not so fast, Zirone," interrupted Sarcany, who again saved the bird's life. "Perhaps the pigeon may tell us *whither it was bound*, providing, of course, that the person *who ought to have the message lives in Trieste*."

"And then? That will not tell you how to read the message, Sarcany."

"No, Zirone."

"Nor to know where it came from."

"Exactly. But of two correspondents I shall know one, and that may tell me how I am to find the other. So, instead of killing this bird, we will feed it, and recruit its strength, and help it to reach its destination."

"With the letter?" asked Zirone.

"With the letter—of which I am just going to make an exact copy; and that I shall keep until the time comes to use it."

And Sarcany took a note-book from his pocket, and in pencil he made a careful fac-simile of the message. Knowing that in most cryptograms it was important not to alter in the least the form and arrangement, he took great care to keep the words exactly in the same order and position and at the same distances as in the document. Then he put the fac-simile in his pocket, the message in its case, and the case in its place under the pigeon's wing.

Zirone looked on. He did not share in the hope that a fortune was to be made out of the mystery.

"And now?" he asked.

"Now," answered Sarcany, "do what you can—for the messenger."

The pigeon was more exhausted by hunger than fatigue. Its wings were intact, without strain or breakage, and showed that its temporary weakness was due neither to a shot from a sportsman nor a stone from a street-boy. It was hungry—it was thirsty; that was all.

Zirone looked about, and found on the ground a few grains of corn, which the bird ate greedily. Then he quenched its thirst with a few drops of water which the last shower had left in a piece of ancient pottery. So well did he do his work that in half an hour the pigeon was refreshed and restored, and quite able to resume its interrupted journey.

"If it is going far," said Sarcany, "if its destination is beyond Trieste, it does not matter to us if it falls on the way, for we shall have lost sight of it, and it will be impossible for us to follow. But if it is going to the houses in Trieste, its strength is sufficient to there, for it will only have to fly for a couple of or so."

"Right you are," replied the Sicilian; "but how are we to see where it drops, even if it is in Trieste?"

"We can manage that, I think," answered Sarcany. And this is what they did.

The cathedral consists of two old Roman churches, one dedicated to the Virgin, one to Saint Just, the patron saint of Trieste. It is flanked by a very high tower which rises from the angle of the front, and is pierced with a large rose window beneath which is the chief door. This tower commands a view over the plateau on Karst Hill, and over the whole city which lies spread as on a map below. From this lofty standpoint they could see down on the roofs of all the houses, even on to those clustering on the nearer slopes of the hill that stretched away to the shore of the gulf. It was therefore not impossible to follow the pigeon in its flight, and recognize the house on which it found refuge, provided it was not bound for some other city of the Illyrian peninsula.

The attempt might succeed. It was at least worth trying. They only had to set the bird at liberty.

Sarcany and Zirone left the old cemetery, crossed the open space by the cathedral, and walked towards the tower. One of the ogival doors—the one under the dripstone beneath St. Just's niche—was open. They entered, and began to ascend the stairs which led to the roof.

It took them two or three minutes to reach the top. They stood just underneath the roof, and there was no balcony. But there were two windows opening out on each side of the tower, and giving a view to each point of the double horizon of hills and sea.

Sarcany and Zirone posted themselves at the windows which looked out over Trieste towards the north-west.

The clock in the old sixteenth-century castle on the top of the Karst, behind the cathedral, struck four. It was still broad daylight. The air was clear, and the sun shone brightly on the waters of the Adriatic, and most of the houses received the light with their fronts facing the tower. Thus far circumstances were favourable.

Sarcany took the pigeon in his hands, he stroked it, spoke to it, gave it a last caress, and threw it free.

The bird flapped its wings, but at first it dropped so quickly that it looked as though it was going to finish its career of aerial messenger by a cruel fall.



It went straight to its home. Page 13

The excitable Sicilian could not restrain a cry of disappointment.

"No! It rises!" said Sarcany.

And the pigeon had found its equilibrium in the denser lower air, and, making a sudden curve, flew off towards the north-west.

Sarcany and Zirone followed it with their eyes.

In its flight there was no hesitation. It went straight to its home—which it would have reached an hour before had it not been for its compulsory halt among the trees of the old graveyard.

Sarcany and his companion watched it with the most anxious attention. They asked themselves if it was going beyond the town—and then all their scheming would come to naught.

It did nothing of the kind.

"I see it! I see it all the time!" said Zirone, whose sight was of the keenest.

"What you have to look for," said Sarcany, "is where it stops, so as to fix the exact spot."

A few minutes after its departure the pigeon settled on a house with one tall gable rising above the rest, in the midst of a clump of trees, in that part of the town near the hospital and public garden. Then it disappeared into a dormer window opening on to the mansard, which was surmounted by a weather-vane of wrought iron, that ought to have been the work of Quentin Matsys—if Trieste had been in Flanders.

The general direction being ascertained, it would not be very difficult to find the weather vane and gable and window, and, in short, the house inhabited by the person for whom the cryptogram was intended.

Sarcany and Zirone immediately made their way down the tower, and down the hill, and along the roads leading to the Piazza della Legna. There they had to lay their course so as to reach the group of houses forming the eastern quarter of the city.

When they reached the junction of two main roads, the Corsa Stadion leading to the public garden, and the Acquedotto, a fine avenue of trees leading to the large brewery of Boschetto, the adventurers were in some doubt as to the true direction. Should they take the right or the left? Instinctively they turned to the right, intending to examine, one after the other, every house along the

avenue above which they had noticed the vane among the trees.

They went along in this manner, inspecting in turn every gable and roof along the Acquedotto, but they found nothing like the one they sought. At last they reached the end.

"There it is!" exclaimed Zirone.

And there was the weather-vane swinging slowly on its iron spindle above a dormer window round which were several pigeons.

There was no mistake. It was the identical house to which the pigeon had flown.

The house was of modest exterior, and formed one of the block at the beginning of the Acquedotto.

Sarcany made inquiries at the neighbouring shops, and learnt all he wished to know.

The house for many years had belonged and been inhabited by Count Ladislas Zathmar.

"Who is this Count Zathmar?" asked Zirone, to whom the name meant nothing.

"He is the Count Zathmar!" answered Sarcany.

"But perhaps if we were to ask him—"

"Later on, Zirone; there's no hurry! Take it coolly, and now to our hotel!"

"Yes, it is dinner-time for those who have got something to dine on!" said Zirone bitterly.

"If we do not dine to-day, it is possible that we shall dine to-morrow," answered Sarcany.

"With whom?"

"Who knows? Perhaps with Count Zathmar!"

They walked along quietly—why should they hurry?—and soon reached their modest hotel, still much too rich for them seeing they could not pay their bill.

What a surprise was in store! A letter had arrived, addressed to Sarcany.

The letter contained a note for 200 florins, and these words—nothing more:—

"Enclosed is the last money you will get from me. It is enough to pay your passage to Sicily. Go, and let me hear no more of you.

"SILAS TORONTHAL."

"Capital!" exclaimed Zirone; "the banker thinks better of it just in time! Assuredly we need never despair of those financial folks!"

"That is what I say," said Sarcany.

"And the coin will do for us to leave Trieste."

"No! we'll stop here!"

CHAPTER III.

COUNT SANDORF.

THE Magyars settled in Hungary towards the end of the ninth century of the Christian era. They now form a third of the population—more than five millions in number. Whence came they—Spain, Egypt, or Central Asia? Are they descended from the Huns of Attila or the Finns of the North? A-disputed question, and of little consequence! One thing is very obvious, that they are neither Slaves nor Germans, and have no desire to become so.

They still speak their old language—a language soft and musical, lending itself to all the charm of poetical cadence, less rich than the German, but more concise, more energetic; a language which between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries took the place of Latin in the laws and edicts, and became the national tongue.

It was on the 21st of January, 1699, that the Treaty of Carlowitz gave Hungary and Transylvania to Austria. Twenty years afterwards the Pragmatic Sanction solemnly declared that the States of Austria-Hungary were thenceforth indivisible. In default of a son the daughter was to succeed to the crown according to the rule of primogeniture. And it was in accordance with this new statute that in 1749 Maria Theresa ascended the throne of her father, Charles VI., the last of the male line of the House of Austria.

The Hungarians had to yield to superior force; but a hundred and fifty years afterwards people were still to be met with amongst all ranks of society who refused to acknowledge either the Pragmatic Sanction or the Treaty of Carlowitz.

At the time this story opens there was a Magyar of high birth whose whole life might be summed up in these two

sentiments, the-hatred of everything German, and the hope of giving his-country her ancient independence. Although still young, he had known Kossuth, and although his birth and education kept him apart from him on important political questions, he could not fail to admire the patriot's nobility of heart.

Count Mathias Sandorf lived in one of the comitats of Transylvania, in the district of Fagaras. His old castle was of feudal origin. Built on one of the northern spurs of those Eastern Carpathians which form the frontier between Transylvania and Wallachia, the castle rose amid the rugged scenery in all its savage pride—a stronghold that conspirators could defend to the last.

The neighbouring mines, rich in iron and copper ore, and carefully worked, yielded a considerable income to the owner of the Castle of Artenak. The estate comprised a part of the district of Fagaras, and the population exceeded 72,000, who, all of them, townsfolk and countryfolk, took pains to show that for Count Sandorf they felt untiring devotion and unbounded gratitude in return for the constant good he had done. This castle was the object of particular attention on the part of the Chancery of Hungary at Vienna, for the ideas of the master of Artenak were known in high quarters, and anxiety was felt about them, although no anxiety was betrayed about him.

Sandorf was then in his thirty-sixth year. He was rather above the middle height, and of great muscular strength. A well-shaped, noble-looking head rose above his broad, powerful shoulders. Of rather dark complexion, and square in feature, his face was of the pure Magyar type. The quickness of his movements, the decision of his speech, the firm, calm look of his eyes, the constant smile on his lips, that unmistakable sign of good-nature, a certain playfulness of gesture and speech,—all went to show an open, generous disposition. It has been said that there are many resemblances between the French and Magyar characters. Sandorf was a living-proof of the truth of this observation.

One of his most striking peculiarities is worth noting. Although Count Sandorf was careless enough of what concerned only himself, and would pass lightly over any injury which affected him alone, he had never forgiven, and never would forgive an offence of which his friends were the victims. He had in the highest degree the spirit of justice and hatred of treachery, and hence possessed a sort of im-

personal implacability, being by no means one of those who leave all punishment in this world to Heaven.

Mathias Sandorf had been highly educated. Instead of confining himself to the life of leisure his fortune opened out to him, he had energetically followed his tastes, and been led to the study of medicine and the physical sciences. He would have made an excellent doctor, had the necessities of life forced him to look after the sick. He was content to be a chemist in high repute amongst the learned. The University of Pesth, the Academy of Sciences at Presburg, the Royal School of Mines at Chemnitz, and the Normal School at Temesvar, had all counted him among their most assiduous pupils. His studious life had improved and intensified his natural gifts. In short, he was a man in the fullest acceptance of the term. And he was held to be so by all who knew him, and more especially by his professors in the different schools and universities, who continued their interest in him as his friends.

Formerly the castle of Artenak had been all gaiety, life, and movement. On this rugged ridge of the Carpathians the Transylvanian hunters had held their meetings. Expeditions, many and dangerous, were organized, in which Count Sandorf sought employment for those instincts of battle which he could not gratify on the field of politics. He kept himself out of the political stream, watching closely the course of events. He seemed only to care about a life spent between his studies and the indulgences that his fortune allowed him.

In those days the Countess Rena Sandorf was still alive. She was the soul of these parties at Artenak. Fifteen months before this history begins, death had struck her in the pride of her youth and beauty, and all that was left of her was a little girl, who was now two years old.

Count Sandorf felt the blow cruelly. He was inconsolable. The castle became silent and deserted. From that day, under the shadow of profound grief, its master lived as if in a cloister. His whole life was centred in his child, who was confided to the charge of Rosena Lendek, the wife of the count's steward. This excellent woman, who was still young, was entirely devoted to the sole heiress of the Sandorfs, and was to her quite a second mother.

During the first months of his widowhood, Sandorf never left his castle of Artenak. He thought over and over

amongst the remembrances of the past. Then the idea of his country reduced to an inferior position in Europe seized upon him. For the Franco-Italian war of 1859 struck a terrible blow at the power of Austria. Seven years afterwards, in 1866, the blow was followed by one still more terrible, that of Sadowa. It was no longer Austria bereft of her Italian possessions; it was Austria conquered on both sides, and subordinated to Germany; and to Austria, Hungary felt she was bound. The Hungarians—there is no reasoning about such a sentiment, for it is in their blood—were humiliated in their pride. For them the victories of Custozza and Lissa were no compensation for the defeat of Sadowa.

Count Sandorf, during the year which followed, had carefully studied the political outlook, and recognized that a separatist movement might be successful. The moment for action had then come. On the 3rd of May of this year, 1867, he had embraced his little daughter, whom he had left to the tender cares of Rosena Lendeck, and, leaving his castle of Artenak, had set out for Pesth, where he had put himself in communication with his friends and partisans, and made certain preliminary arrangements. Then a few hours later he had gone to Trieste to wait for events.

There he became the chief centre of the conspiracy, and thence radiated all its threads collected in his hands. In this town the chiefs could act with more safety and freedom in bringing their patriotic work to an end.

At Trieste lived two of Sandorf's most intimate friends. Animated by the same spirit, they were resolved to follow the enterprise to its conclusion. Count Ladislas Zathmar and Professor Stephen Bathory were Magyars of good birth. Both were a dozen years older than Sandorf, but were almost without fortune. One drew his slender revenues from a small estate in the comitat of Lipto, belonging to a circle beyond the Danube; the other was a professor of Physical Science at Trieste, and his only income came from his lecture fees.

Ladislas Zathmar lived in the house discovered on the Acquedotto by Sarcany and Zirone—an unpretending place, which he had put at the disposal of Mathias Sandorf during the time he was away from Artenak, that is to say, till the end of the projected movement, whenever it might be. A Hungarian, Borik, aged about fifty-five, re-

presented the whole staff of the house. Borik was as much devoted to his master as Lendeck was to his.

Stephen Bathory occupied a no less unpretending dwelling on the Corso Stadion, not far from Count Zathmar's. Here his whole life was wrapped up in his wife and his son Peter, then eight years old.

Stephen Bathory belonged, distantly but authentically, to the line of those Magyar princes who in the sixteenth century occupied the throne of Transylvania. The family had been divided and lost in its numberless ramifications since then, and people may perhaps think it astonishing that one of its last descendants should exist as a simple professor of the academy at Presburg. Whatever he might be, Stephen Bathory was a scientist of the first rank—one of those who live in retirement, but whose work renders them famous. *Inclusum labor illustrat*, the motto of the silkworm, might have been his. One day his political ideas, which he took no pains to conceal, rendered it necessary for him to resign, and then he came to live at Trieste as professor unattached.

It was in Zathmar's house that the three friends had met since the arrival of Count Sandorf—although the latter ostensibly occupied an apartment in the Palazzo Modello on the Piazza Grande. The police had no suspicion that the house in the Acquedotto was the centre of a conspiracy which counted numbers of partisans in all the principal towns.

Zathmar and Bathory were Sandorf's most devoted auxiliaries. Like him, they had seen that circumstances were favourable to a movement which might restore Hungary to the place she desired in Europe. They risked their lives, they knew, but that they cared little about. The house in the Acquedotto had thus become the rendezvous of the chiefs of the conspiracy. Numbers of partisans, summoned from different points of the kingdom, came there to take their measures and receive their orders. A service of carrier-pigeons was organized, and established rapid and safe communication between Trieste and the chief towns of Hungary and Transylvania when it was necessary to send what could not well be confided to the post or telegraph. In short, every precaution had been taken, and the conspirators had not as yet raised the least breath of suspicion. Besides, as we know, the correspondence was carried on in cipher, and on such a plan

that unless the secret was known, absolute security was obtained.

Three days after the arrival of the carrier-pigeon whose message had been intercepted by Sarcany, on the 21st of May, about eight o'clock in the evening, Zathmar and Bathory were in the study, waiting the return of Matthias Sandorf. His private affairs had recently compelled the count to return into Transylvania and to Artenak; but he had taken the opportunity of consulting with his friends at Klausenburg, the capital of the province, and he was to get back this very day, after sending them the despatch of which Sarcany had taken the duplicate.

During the time Sandorf was away, other correspondence had been exchanged between Trieste and Buda, and many letters in cipher had arrived by pigeon-post. And Zathmar was even now busy in working out the real meaning of one of these cryptographic epistles by means of a "grating."

The despatches were devised on a very simple plan—that of the transposition of the letters. In this system every letter retained its alphabetical value, that is to say, *b* meant *b*, *o* meant *o*, &c. But the letters were successively transposed in accordance with the openings of a grating, which, laid on the message, only allowed such letters to appear as were to be read, and hid all the others.

These gratings are an old invention, but having been greatly improved by Colonel Fleissner, they seem now to offer the best and surest means of obtaining an indecipherable cryptogram. In all the other systems of inversion—be they systems with an invariable base, or a simple key in which each letter is always represented by the same letter or sign; be they systems with a variable base, or a double key in which the alphabet varies with each letter—the security is incomplete. Experienced decipherers are capable of performing perfect prodigies in such investigations, either with the aid of the calculation of probabilities, or by merely trying, and trying, until they succeed. All that has to be done is to find out the letters in the order of their repetition in the cryptogram—*e* being that most frequently employed in English, German, and French, *o* in Spanish, *a* in Russian, and *e* and *i* in Italian—and the meaning of the text is soon made clear. And there are very few cryptograms based on these methods which defy investigation.

It would appear, therefore, that the best guarantee for in-

decipherability is afforded by these gratings, or by ciphered dictionaries—codes, that is to say, or vocabularies in which certain common words represent fully-formed sentences indicated by the page number. But both these systems have one grave drawback ; they require absolute secrecy on the part of those that use them, and the greatest care that the books or apparatus should never get into undesirable hands. Without the grating, or the code, the message will remain unread ; but once these are obtained, the mystery vanishes.

It was then by means of a grating—that is to say, a piece of card, cut out in certain places—that the correspondence between Sandorf and his accomplices was carried on ; but as an extra precaution, in case the gratings should be lost or stolen, every despatch after being deciphered was destroyed. There thus remained no trace of this conspiracy in which the greatest-noblemen and magnates of Hungary were risking their lives, in conjunction with the representatives of the middle-class and the bulk of the people.

Zathmar had just burnt his last despatch, when there came a quiet knock at the study door.

It was Borik introducing Count Mathias Sandorf, who had walked up from the nearest railway station.

Zathmar immediately rose to greet him.

"Your journey, Mathias?" asked he with the eagerness of a man who wished at the outset to find that all was well.

"It was a-success, Zathmar," answered Sandorf. "I have no doubt of my Transylvanian friends, and we are certain of their assistance."

"You let them have the despatch which came from Pesth three days ago?" asked Bathory.

"Yes," said Sandorf. "Yes. They have all been cautioned, and they are all ready. They will rise at the first signal. In two hours we shall be masters of Buda and Pesth, in half a day we shall get the chief comitats on both sides of the Theiss, and before the day is out we shall have Transylvania and the rest. And then eight millions of Hungarians will have regained their independence!"

"And the Diet?" asked Bathory.

"Our supporters form the majority," answered Sandorf. "They will also form the new-Government, to take the direction of affairs. All will go regularly and easily, for the comitats, as far as their administration goes, depend

very little on the Crown, and their chiefs have the police with them."

"But the council of the lieutenancy of the kingdom that the palatine presides over at Buda?" continued Zathmar.

"The palatine and the council at Buda will immediately be so placed as to be unable to do anything."

"And unable to correspond with the Hungarian Chancery at Vienna?"

"Yes, all our measures are taken for our movements to be simultaneous, and thus ensure success."

"Success!" said Bathory.

"Yes, success!" answered Count Sandorf. "In the army all of our blood, of Hungarian blood, are for us! Where is the descendant of the ancient Magyars whose heart will not beat at the sight of the banner of Rodolph and Corvinus?"

And Sandorf uttered the words in a tone of the purest patriotism.

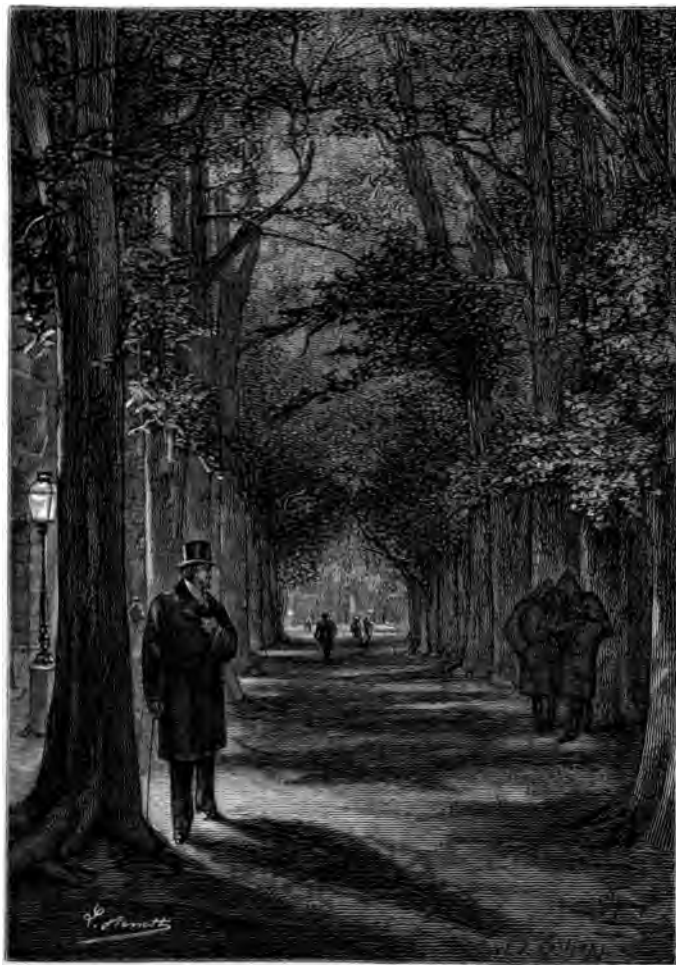
"But," continued he, "neglect nothing that will prevent suspicion! Be prudent, we cannot be too strong! You have heard of nothing suspicious at Trieste?"

"No," replied Zathmar. "Nothing is spoken of but the works at Pola, for which the greater part of the workmen have been engaged."

In fact for fifteen years the Austrian Government, with a view of the possible loss of Venetia—a loss now realized—had been thinking of founding at Pola, at the southern extremity of the Istrian peninsula, an immense arsenal and dockyard, so as to command all that end of the Adriatic. In spite of the protests of Trieste, whose maritime importance would thereby be lessened, the works were being pushed on with feverish ardour. Sandorf and his friends had thus some justification for their opinion that Trieste would join them in the event of a separatist movement being started in the city.

Up to the present the secret of the conspiracy in favour of Hungarian autonomy had been well kept. Nothing had occurred to cause the police to suspect that the chief conspirators were then assembled at the unpretending house in the Acquedotto.

Everything seemed to have been done to make the enterprise a success; and all that remained was to wait for the moment of action. The cipher correspondence between Trieste and the principal cities of Hungary and Transyl-



Two men watching them. **Page 23**

vania had almost ceased. There were now few messages for the pigeons to carry, because the last measures had been taken. As money is the-soul of war, so it is of conspiracies. It is important that conspirators have ample funds when the signal of uprising is given. And on this occasion the supply would not fail them.

We are aware that, although Zathmar and Bathory could sacrifice their lives for their country, they could not sacrifice their fortunes, inasmuch as their pecuniary resources were but meagre. But Count Sandorf was immensely rich, and, in addition to his life, he had brought his whole fortune to the help of the cause. For many months, through the agency of his steward, -Lendeck, he had mortgaged his estates, and thereby raised a considerable sum—more than two millions of florins.

But it was necessary that this money should always be at call, and that he could draw it at any moment. And so he had deposited it in his own name in one of the banks of Trieste, whose character was above suspicion. This bank was Toronthal's, of which Sarcany and Zirone had been talking in the cemetery on the hill.

The circumstance was fraught with the gravest consequences, as will be seen in the course of this history. Something was said about this money at Sandorf's last interview with Zathmar and Bathory. He told them that it was his intention to call on Toronthal, and give him notice that the cash might be wanted immediately.

Events had so progressed that Sandorf would soon be able to give the expected signal from Trieste—more especially as this very evening he discovered that Zathmar's house was the object of very disquieting surveillance.

About eight o'clock, as Sandorf and Bathory went out, one to go home to the Corso Stadion, and the other to his hotel, they noticed two men watching them in the shadows and following them at such a distance and in such a way as to avoid detection.

Sandorf and his companion, in order to see what this might mean, boldly marched straight on to these suspicious characters, but before they could reach them they had taken flight and disappeared round the corner of St Antonio's Church, at the end of the canal.

CHAPTER IV.

TORONTHAL'S BANK.

AT Trieste "society" is nearly non-existent. Between different races, as between different castes, it is seldom found. The Austrian officials assume the highest position, and take precedence according to their respective ranks. Generally these men are distinguished, well educated, and well-meaning; but their pay is so small for their position that they are unable to enter into competition with the trading and banking classes. These latter, as entertainments are rare among the rich, and the parties given by the officials are nearly always unambitious, have taken to display most of their wealth in outside show—in the streets by their sumptuous carriages, and at the theatre by the extravagance of their dress and jewellery. Amongst these opulent families, that of Silas Toronthal held a distinguished place.

The head of the house, whose credit extended far beyond the limits of Austria-Hungary, was then in his thirty-seventh year. With Madame Toronthal, who was several years his junior, he occupied a mansion in the Acquedotto. He was supposed to be very rich—and he should have been. Bold and fortunate speculations on the Stock Exchange, a large business with the Austrian Lloyds and other extensive companies, and the issuing of several important loans, had, or ought to have, brought huge sums into his coffers. Hence his household was conducted on a scale of considerable splendour.

Nevertheless, as Sarcany had said to Zirone, there was a possibility that the affairs of Silas Toronthal were slightly embarrassed—at least for a time. Seven years before, when the funds were shaken by the Franco-Italian war, he had received a severe blow, and more recently the disastrous campaign which ended at Sadowa had sent down the prices on every Exchange in Europe, more especially on those of Austria-Hungary, and chiefly those of Vienna, Pesth, and Trieste. The necessity of providing the large amounts then drawn out on the current accounts not improbably caused him serious inconvenience. But when the *crisis had passed*, he doubtless recovered himself, and if *what Sarcany had said* was correct, it must have been

his recent speculations only which had led him into difficulties.

During the last few months a great change had come over Toronthal. His whole look had altered without his knowledge. He was not, as formerly, master of himself. People had noticed that he no longer looked them in the face, as had been his custom, but rather eyed them askance. This had not escaped the notice of Madame Toronthal, a confirmed invalid, submissiveness itself, who knew very little about his business matters.

And if some disaster did menace Toronthal, it must be admitted that he would get very little sympathy. He had many customers, but few friends. The high opinion he held about his position, his native vanity, the airs he gave himself on all occasions, had not done him any good. And above all the people of Trieste looked upon him as a foreigner because he was born at Ragusa, and hence was a Dalmatian. No family ties attached him to the town to which he had come fifteen years before to lay the foundations of his fortune.

Such then was the position of Toronthal's bank. Although Sarcany had his suspicions, nothing had occurred to give rise to a rumour that it was in difficulties. Its credit remained unshaken. And Count Sandorf, after realizing his investments, had deposited with it a considerable sum—on condition that it should always be available at twenty-four hours' notice.

It may seem surprising that a connection of any sort should have been formed between a bank of such high reputation and such a very dubious character as Sarcany. It had existed, nevertheless, for two or three years. Toronthal had had a good deal of business with the Regency of Tripoli, and Sarcany had been employed as a kind of broker and general confidential agent, entrusted with the disposal of certain wine and other gifts under circumstances in which it was not always desirable that the Trieste banker should appear in person. Having been engaged in these and other rather suspicious schemes, Sarcany got his foot, or rather his hand, into the bank; and continued to carry on a sort of system of extortion on Toronthal, who was not, however, quite at his mercy, inasmuch as no material proof existed of their mutual dealings. But a banker's position is one of extreme delicacy. A word may ruin him. And Sarcany knew how to take advantage of this.

C 2

But Toronthal knew what he was about. He had parted with certain sums, which had been dissipated in the gambling-houses with the recklessness of an adventurer who takes no thought of the future, and then Sarcany becoming too importunate, the banker suddenly drew his purse-strings, and refused further credit. Sarcany threatened; Toronthal remained firm. And he was safe in doing so, after all, for Sarcany had no proofs, and no one would believe him.

This was the reason that Sarcany and his comrade, Zirone, found themselves at the end of their resources, and without even the wherewithal to leave the town, and seek their fortune elsewhere. And we know how Toronthal came to their help with sufficient funds to enable them to return to Sicily, where Zirone belonged to one of the secret societies. The banker thus hoped to get rid of the Tripolitan, and hoped never to see or hear of him again. He was doomed to disappointment in this, as in most other matters.

It was on the evening of the 18th of May that the two hundred florins had reached the adventurers at their hotel.

Six days afterwards, on the 24th of the same month, Sarcany presented himself at the bank, and demanded to see Silas Toronthal; and so much did he insist, that he was at length received.

The banker was in his private office, and Sarcany carefully closed the door as soon as he had been introduced.

"You again!" exclaimed Toronthal. "What are you doing here? I sent you, and for the last time, quite enough to help you to leave Trieste! You will get nothing more from me, ^{whatever} you may say or do! Why have you not gone? I'll take steps to put a stopper on you for the future! What do you want?"

Sarcany received the broadside very coolly. He was quite prepared for it. His attitude was what it had always been of late in his visits to the banker—insolent and provoking.

Not only was he master of himself, but he was quite serious. He had stepped up to a chair, without being invited to sit down, and waited until the banker's bad temper had evaporated, before he replied.

"Well, why don't you speak?" continued Toronthal, who, after hurriedly striding to and fro, had sat down.

"I am waiting till you are calm," replied Sarcany, *very quietly*; "and I'll wait as long as is necessary."

"What does it matter whether I am calm ! For the last time, what do you want ?"

"Silas Toronthal," answered Sarcany, "I have a little business to-propose to you."

"I do not want to talk about business to you !" exclaimed the banker. "There is nothing in common between you and me, and I only expect to hear that you are off from Trieste to-day for ever."

"I expect to leave Trieste," answered Sarcany, "but I do not like to go until I have repaid you what I owe !"

"You repay me ?—you ?"

"Yes, repay you interest, capital, without saying anything of the—"

Toronthal shrugged his shoulders at this unexpected proposition.

"The sums I have advanced," he said, "are charged to profit and loss, and are written off ! I consider we are clear. I want nothing from you, and I am above such trifles."

"And if it pleases me to remain your debtor ?"

"And if it pleases me to remain your creditor ?"

Then Toronthal and Sarcany looked at each other, and then Sarcany, with a shrug of his shoulders, continued,—

"These are only phrases, and there is nothing in phrases. I repeat, I come to bring you some very important business."

"And suspicious business, too, I daresay ?"

"Well, it is not the first time that you have come to me—"

"Words, nothing but words !" said the banker.

"Listen," said Sarcany. "I will be brief."

"And you had better."

"If what I am going to tell you does not suit you, say so, and I'll go !"

"From here, or from Trieste ?"

"From here and from Trieste."

"To-morrow ?"

"This evening !"

"Speak, then !"

"Well, then, this is it," said Sarcany. "But," added he, looking round, "you are sure no one can hear us ?"

"You would like our interview to be secret, then ?" asked the banker ironically.

"Yes, Silas Toronthal, for you and I hold in our hands the lives of important personages."

"You do, perhaps. I do not!"

"Well, then; see. I am on the track of a conspiracy. What its object is I do not yet know. But after what has happened on the plains of Lombardy, after the business at Sadowa, all that is not Austrian is against Austria. And I have some reason to think that a movement is on foot in favour of Hungary by which we can profit."

Toronthal, as his only reply, contented himself with saying,—

"I have nothing to get out of your conspiracy."

"Perhaps not."

"But how?"

"By denouncing it!"

"Explain!"

"Listen."

And Sarcany told him of all that had happened in the old cemetery, of the carrier-pigeon, of the intercepted message—of which he had taken a fac-simile—and of how he had found out the bird's destination. He added that for five days he and Zirone had been watching the house; how the same people met there every night, not without great precautions; of other pigeons that had gone away, and others that had come; of how the house was guarded by an old servant, who carefully inspected all who approached; of how Sarcany and his companion had been obliged to act with circumspection to evade the attention of this old man; and of how, during the last few days, he was afraid he had raised suspicions.

Toronthal began to listen more attentively to what Sarcany told him. He asked himself if it were true, and what gain he could get out of it. When the story was told, when Sarcany for the last time affirmed that there was a conspiracy against the State, and that something could be made out of revealing its existence, the banker asked the following questions:—

"Where is this house?"

"No. 89, Avenue de Acquedotto."

"To whom does it belong?"

"To a Hungarian gentleman."

"What is the Hungarian gentleman's name?"

"Count Ladislas Zathmar."

"And who are the people that visit him?"

"Two chiefly; two of Hungarian birth."

"One is—?"

"A professor of this town. His name is Stephen Bathory."

"The other is—?"

"Count Mathias Sandorf."

Toronthal made a start of surprise, which did not escape Sarcany. He had easily found the three names by following Bathory to the Corso Stadion and Sandorf to the Palazzo Modello.

"You see, Toronthal," continued Sarcany, "these are the names I have no hesitation in giving you. You see I am not playing with you."

"All that is very vague!" replied the banker, who evidently wished to know more before committing himself.

"Vague?" said Sarcany.

"Yes! To begin with, you have no material proof!"

"And what is this, then?"

The copy of the message was placed in Toronthal's hands. The banker examined it, not without curiosity. But its cryptographic words gave no sign of sense to him, and there was nothing to prove that they were of the importance that Sarcany asserted. If he had any interest in the affair, it was merely in so far as it affected his customer, Count Sandorf, and with him nothing could occur to make him uneasy, unless it came to pass that he desired to draw out at short notice the funds deposited in the bank.

"Well," said he at length, "my opinion still is that it is very vague."

"Nothing seems clearer to me, on the contrary," answered Sarcany, whom the banker's attitude in no way dismayed.

"Have you been able to decipher this letter?"

"No, but I know how to do so when the time comes."

"And how?"

"I have had something to do with such matters before," said Sarcany, "and a good many ciphered despatches have passed through my hands. From a careful examination of that one, I see that its key does not depend on a number or a conventional alphabet, which attributes to a letter a different meaning to its real meaning. In this letter an *s* is an *z*, a *p* is a *q*; but the letters are arranged in a certain order, which order can be discovered by a grating."

Sarcany, as we know, was right. That was the system.

that had been used for the correspondence. We also know that it was the most indecipherable one that could be found.

"Be it so," said the banker. "I do not deny but what you are right; but without the grating you cannot read the message."

"Evidently."

"And how will you get the grating?"

"I do not know yet," answered Sarcany; "but rest assured I shall get it."

"Really! Well, if I were in your place, Sarcany, I should give myself a good deal of trouble to do so!"

"I shall take the trouble that is necessary."

"To what end? I should content myself with going to the police and handing them the message."

"I will do so," replied Sarcany coldly; "but not with these simple presumptions. What I want before I speak are material, undeniable proofs. I intend to become master of this conspiracy—yes! absolute master of it, to gain advantages from it which I ask you to share! And who knows even if it may not be better to join the conspirators instead of taking part against them?"

Such language did not astonish Toronthal. He well knew of what Sarcany was capable. But if Sarcany did not hesitate to speak in this way, it was because he, too, knew of what Toronthal was capable. His conscience was elastic enough for anything. Sarcany knew him of old, and suspected that the bank had been in difficulties for some time, so that this conspiracy, surprised, betrayed, and made use of, might come to its aid. Such was Sarcany's idea.

Toronthal, on the other hand, was seeking to join in with his old broker. That there did exist some conspiracy against the Austrian Government, and that Sarcany had discovered the conspirators, he was inclined to admit. This house of Ladislas Zathmar, with the secret meetings, this ciphered correspondence, the enormous sum held at call by Sandorf,—all began to look very suspicious. Very likely Sarcany was right. But the banker was anxious to do the best he could for himself, and sound the matter to the bottom, and would not yet give in. So he contented himself with saying,—

"And when you have deciphered the letter—if you ever *do—you will find it only refers to private affairs of no im-*

portance, and consequently there will be no profit for you—or me!”

“No!” said Sarcany, in a tone of the deepest conviction. “No! I am on the track of a serious conspiracy, conducted by men of high rank, and I add, Silas Toronthal, that you doubt it no more than I do.”

“Well, what do you want?” asked the banker.

Sarcany rose, and, in a lower tone, looking straight at Toronthal, replied,—

“What I want is this: I want admission to Count Zathmar’s house, on some pretext yet to be found, so that I can gain his confidence. Once there, where nobody knows me, I shall get hold of the grating and decipher this despatch, which I can then make use of to further our interests.”

“Our interests?—why do you want to mix me up in the affair?”

“Because it is well worth the trouble, and you will gain something out of it.”

“And could not you do that by yourself?”

“No! I have need of your help.”

“Explain.”

“To attain my end I want time, and while I am waiting I want money. I have none.”

“Your credit is exhausted here, you know!”

“Well, you will open another.”

“What good will that do to me?”

“This. Of the three men I have spoken to you about, two are poor—Zathmar and Professor Bathory—but the third is immensely rich. His possessions in Transylvania are considerable. You know that if he is arrested as a conspirator, and found guilty, his goods will be confiscated, and the greatest part of them will go to those who discovered and denounced the conspiracy! You and I, Silas Toronthal! We go shares!”

Sarcany was silent. The banker made no answer. He was thinking if it were worth while to join in the game. He was not the man to personally compromise himself in an affair of this nature; but he felt that his agent would be man enough to act for both. If he decided to join in the scheme, he knew well how to make a treaty which would hold his man at his mercy, and enable him to remain in the dark. He hesitated, for all that. Good! To get all, what did he risk? He need not appear in this odior

affair, and he would reap the profit—enormous profit—which would get the bank on a sound footing again.

"Well?" asked Sarcany.

"Well? No!" answered Toronthal, frightened at having such an associate, or, to use the proper word, such an accomplice.

"You refuse?"

"Yes—I refuse—besides, I do not believe in the success of your schemes."

"Take care, Toronthal," said Sarcany, in a threatening tone, which he could not restrain.

"Take care? And of what, if you please?"

"Of what I know of certain transactions—"

"Clear out!" answered Toronthal.

"I shall know how to compel you—"

"Go!"

At the moment there came a gentle knock at the door. As Sarcany quickly stepped to the window the door opened, and the messenger said in a loud voice,—

"Count Sandorf will be glad if Mr. Toronthal will give him a few moments' conversation."

Then he retired.

"Count Sandorf!" exclaimed Sarcany.

The banker was anything but pleased for Sarcany to know of this visit. And he also foresaw that considerable difficulty would result from the count's unexpected arrival.

"And what does Count Sandorf do here?" asked Sarcany ironically. "You, then, have something to do with the conspirators at Count Zathmar's! In fact, I have been talking to one of them!"

"Again I tell you to go."

"I shall not go, Toronthal, and I shall find out why Count Sandorf comes to your banking-house!"

And he stepped into a cupboard leading out of the office and shut the door.

Toronthal was about to call and have him turned out, but he thought better of it.

"No!" he muttered; "after all, it is better Sarcany should hear all that goes on!"

The banker rang for the messenger, and requested him to admit the count.

Sandorf entered the office, replied coldly, as was his wont, to the obsequious inquiries of the banker, and seated *himself in a chair which Toronthal brought forward.*

"I did not know, count, that you were in Trieste, so that you call unexpectedly ; but it is always an honour for the bank to receive a visit from you."

"Sir," replied the count, "I am one of your least important customers, and I never have much business, as you know. But I have to thank you for having taken charge of the money that I have with you."

"Count," observed Toronthal, "I would remind you that that money is on current account here, and that you are losing all-interest for it."

"I know," replied Sandorf. "But I do not wish to make an investment with your house ; it is left simply on deposit."

"Quite so, count, but money is dear just now, and it does not seem right that yours should remain unproductive. A financial crisis threatens to extend over the whole country. The position is not an easy one in the interior. Business is paralyzed. Many important failures have shaken public credit, and I am afraid others are coming—"

"But your house, sir, is safe enough," said Sandorf ; "and on very good authority I know that it has been but little affected by these failures."

"Oh ! very little," answered Toronthal, with the greatest calmness. "The Adriatic trade keeps us going with a constant flood of maritime business that is wanting to the Pesth and Vienna houses, and we have only been very slightly touched by the crisis. We have nothing to complain of, count, and we do not complain."

"I can only congratulate you, sir," answered Sandorf.

"By-the-by, with regard to this crisis, is there any talk of political complications in the interior ?"

Although Sandorf had asked the question without appearing to attach any importance to it, Toronthal regarded it with rather more attention. It agreed so well, in fact, with what he had just heard from Sarcany.

"I do not know of anything," said the banker. "And I have not heard that the Austrian Government has any apprehension on the subject. Have you, count, any reason to suppose that something is—?"

"Not at all," replied Sandorf ; "but in banking circles things are frequently known which the public does not hear of till afterwards. That is why I asked you the question, leaving it to you to answer or not, as you felt inclined."

"I have heard nothing in that way," said Toronthal ; "and, besides, with a client like you, count, I should not think it right to remain silent if I knew anything, as your interests might suffer."

"I am much obliged to you," answered Sandorf ; "and, like you, I do not think there is much to fear either in home or foreign matters. I am soon going to leave Trieste on urgent private affairs for Transylvania."

"Oh ! you are going away ?" asked Toronthal quickly.

"Yes, in a fortnight, or perhaps later."

"And you will return to Trieste ?"

"I do not think so," answered Sandorf. "But before I go, I want to get my accounts in order referring to the castle of Artenak, which are standing over. I have received from my steward a quantity of notes, farm rents and forest revenues, and I have not time to check them. Do you know of any accountant, or could you spare one of your clerks, to do it for me ?"

"Nothing easier."

"I should be much obliged."

"When shall I send him to you, count ?"

"As soon as possible."

"To what address ?"

"To my friend, Count Zathmar, whose house is No. 89, in the Acquedotto."

"It shall be done, count."

"It will take ten days or more, I should think ; and when the accounts are in order, I shall leave for Artenak. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will have the money ready, so that I can draw."

Toronthal at this request could not restrain a slight movement, which, however, was unnoticed by Sandorf.

"What date do you wish to draw ?"

"The eighth of next month."

"The money shall be ready."

And Count Sandorf rose, and the banker accompanied him to the door of the ante-room.

When Toronthal re-entered his office he found Sarcany, who greeted him with,—

"Before two days are over it is necessary that I get admission to Count Zathmar's house in the character of this accountant."

And Toronthal answered,—

"It is indeed necessary."

CHAPTER V.

THE MESSAGE IN CIPHER.

Two days afterwards Sarcany was installed in the house of Ladislas Zathmar. He had been introduced by Silas Toronthal, and on his introduction had been received by Count Sandorf. The banker and his agent had become accomplices, the object of their schemes being the discovery of a secret which might cost the chiefs of the conspiracy their lives, and the result, as the price of their information, a fortune falling into the pocket of an adventurer, that it might find its way into the strong box of a banker who had reached the point of being unable to honour his engagements.

A formal agreement had been drawn up between Toronthal and Sarcany, according to which the expected profit was to be shared equally. Sarcany was to have sufficient to enable him and his companion, Zirone, to live comfortably at Trieste, and to meet all outgoings and expenses. In exchange, and as a guarantee, he had handed over to the banker the fac-simile of the message which contained—there could be no doubt—the secret of the conspiracy.

It may perhaps be said that Sandorf was imprudent in acting thus. Under such circumstances to introduce a stranger into the house where such important matters were in hand, on the very eve of a rising of which the signal might be sent at any moment, might seem an act of strange imprudence. But the count had not acted thus without being obliged.

It was necessary that his personal affairs should be put in order now that he was about to enter on a perilous adventure in which he risked his life, or at least his exile, if he was obliged to fly in the event of failure. Besides, the introduction of a stranger into Zathmar's house appeared to him calculated to prevent suspicion. He fancied that for some days—and we know that he was not mistaken—there had been spies in the Acquedotto; spies who were no other than Sarcany and Zirone. Were the police of Trieste keeping their eyes on his friends and him, and their proceedings? Sandorf might well think so and fear so. *If the meeting-place of the conspirators, hitherto so obstinately kept hidden, seemed to him to be suspected, wh*

better means of baffling suspicion could be devised than to admit within it an accountant merely busying himself with accounts. How could the presence of a clerk be dangerous to Zathmar and his guests? In no way. There was no longer any interchange of ciphered correspondence between Trieste and the other towns of Hungary. All the papers relating to the movement had been destroyed. There remained no written trace of the conspiracy. The measures had been taken that were intended to be taken. Count Sandorf had only to give the signal when the moment arrived. So that the introduction of a clerk into the house, which the Government might have under surveillance, was calculated to allay all suspicion. That is to say, the reasoning was just and the precaution good, had the clerk been any one else than Sarcany, and his introducer any other than Silas Toronthal.

Sarcany was a past-master in duplicity, and took full advantage of the gifts he possessed—that open face, with its frank, clear expression, and honest, straightforward look. Count Sandorf and his two companions could not but be taken with him—and they were taken with him. In no way did he show or learn that he was in the presence of the chiefs of a conspiracy to raise the Hungarian race in revolt against the Germans. Mathias Sandorf, Stephen Bathory, and Ladislas Zathmar seemed at their meetings to be only occupied with discussions on art and science. There was no secret correspondence; there were no mysterious comings and goings about the house. But Sarcany knew what he wanted. The chance he wanted was sure to come in time, and he waited for it.

In entering Zathmar's house, Sarcany had but one object in view—to possess himself of the grating that would enable him to decipher the cryptogram; and as no ciphered despatch arrived at Trieste, he began to ask himself if, for prudential reasons, the grating had been destroyed? This would be rather annoying for him, as all the scaffolding of his scheme was based on his being able to read the letter brought by the pigeon.

Thus as he worked at putting in order the accounts of Mathias Sandorf, he kept his eyes open; he watched, he spied. Admission to the room where the meetings took place between Zathmar and his companions was not forbidden him. Very often he worked there all alone; and then his eyes and his fingers were occupied in quite other

tasks than making calculations or casting figures. He ferreted among the papers; he opened the drawers by means of skeleton-keys made him by Zirone, who was quite an adept in such matters. And all the time he kept a strict watch on Borik, with whom he seemed somehow to be quite out of sympathy.

For five days Sarcany's search was useless. Each morning he came with the hope of succeeding; each evening he returned to his hotel without having discovered anything. He feared he was going to fail after all in his treacherous enterprise. The conspiracy—if there were a conspiracy, and he could not doubt that there was one—might come to a head at any moment before it had been discovered, and consequently before it had been reported. "But rather than lose the benefit of a discovery, even without satisfactory proofs, better inform the police," said Zirone, "and give them a copy of the letter."

"That is what I am going to do if necessary," said Sarcany.

Of course Toronthal was kept informed of all that went on. And it was not without difficulty that the impatience of the banker was duly curbed.

Chance came at last to his assistance. On the first occasion it brought him the message, and now it came to him to show him how the message could be deciphered. It was the last day of May, about four o'clock in the afternoon. Sarcany, according to his custom, was going to leave Zathmar's house at five. He was greatly disappointed that he had advanced no further than on the first day, and that the work he had been doing for Count Sandorf was approaching its end. When the task was finished, he would evidently be dismissed with thanks and rewards, and he would have no chance of again entering the house.

Zathmar and his two friends were not at home. There was no one in the house but Borik, and he was busy on the ground-floor. Sarcany, finding himself free to do as he liked, resolved to go into Count Zathmar's room—which he had not yet been able to do—and there search everything he could. The door was locked. Sarcany with his skeleton keys soon opened it and entered.

Between the two windows opening on to the street there was a writing-desk, whose antique shape would have delighted a connoisseur in old furniture. The shut-down front prevented any one inspecting what was inside.

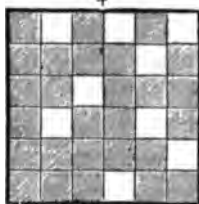
It was the first time Sarcany had the chance of getting near this piece of furniture, and he was not the man to waste his opportunities. To rummage its different drawers he only had to force the front! And this he did with the aid of his instruments, without the lock being injured. In the fourth drawer, under a pile of papers, was a kind of card cut into curious holes. The card caught his attention at once.

"The grating!" he said. He was not mistaken.

His first idea was to take it with him, but on reflection he saw that its disappearance would awake suspicion if Count Zathmar noticed it had gone. "Good," said he to himself, "as I copied the message, so I'll copy the grating, and Toronthal and I can read the despatch at our ease."

The grating was merely a square of card about two and a half inches long divided into thirty-six equal squares. Of these thirty-six equal squares, arranged in six horizontal and vertical lines like those on a Pythagorean table of six ciphers, twenty-seven were shaded and nine were open—that is to say, nine squares had been cut out of the card and left nine openings in different positions.

Sarcany had to be careful to take the exact size of the grating, and the exact position of the nine blank squares. And this he did by tracing the grating on a sheet of white paper, and marking on his copy a small-cross which he found on the original, and which seemed to distinguish the top side. As he traced the grating on his paper he found that blanks occupied the places of squares 2, 4, and 6 in the first line, of 5 in the second line, of 3 in the third line, of 2 and 5 in the fourth line, of 6 in the fifth line, and of 4



in the sixth line, exactly as shown in the annexed diagram, wherein the open squares are represented unshaded, and which is an accurate portrait of the grating of which Sarcany and Toronthal made such dastardly use.

By means of this grating, which it would be easy to copy on a piece of ordinary card, Sarcany felt that he would have no difficulty in deciphering the fac-simile of the message then in possession of Toronthal; and so he put back the original grating among the papers, as he had found it, left Zathmar's room, left the house, and returned to his hotel.

A quarter of an hour afterwards Zirone beheld him *enter the room with such a triumphant air that he could*

not help exclaiming,—“Hallo! what is up? Take care of yourself! You are not so clever in hiding your joy as you are your grief, and you'll betray yourself, if—”

“Shut up,” answered Sarcany, “and to work without losing a moment.”

“Before we feed?”

“Before we feed.”

And then Sarcany picked up a card of moderate thickness. He cut it according to his tracing so as to obtain a grating of the exact shape of his copy, not forgetting the little cross which showed the right end uppermost. Then he took a rule and divided his rectangle into thirty-six squares, all of equal size. Then of these thirty-six squares nine were marked as they appeared on the tracing, and cut out with the point of a penknife so as to show through them, when applied to the message, whatever signs or letters were to be read.

Zirone sat facing Sarcany, and, watched him as he worked. He was deeply interested in the performance, because he thoroughly understood the system of cryptography employed in the correspondence.

“Now that is ingenious,” he said, “highly ingenious, and may be of some use! When I think that each of those empty squares may perhaps hold a million of money—”

“And more!” said Sarcany.

The work was at an end Sarcany rose and put the cut card into his pocket-book.

“The first thing to-morrow morning I call on Toronthal,” he said.

“Keep an eye on his cash-box.”

“If he has the message, I have the grating!”

“And this time he will have to give it up.”

“He will give it up.”

“And now we can feed?”

“We can feed.”

“Come on, then.”

And Zirone, always blessed with a healthy appetite, did full justice to the excellent meal he had, according to his custom, previously ordered.

In the morning—it was the 1st of June—at eight o'clock, Sarcany presented himself at the bank, and Toronthal gave orders for him to be shown into the office immediately.

"There is the grating," was all that Sarcany said as he laid the card on the table.

The banker took it, turned it round and round, jerked his head first to one side, then the other, and did not seem at all to share in the confidence of his associate.

"Let us try it," said Sarcany.

"Well, we'll try it."

Toronthal took the fac-simile of the message from one of the drawers in his desk and laid it on the table.

It may be recollected that the message was composed of eighteen words, each containing six letters—the words being quite unintelligible. It was obvious that each letter ought to correspond with a square of the card ; and consequently that the six first words of the message, composed of thirty-six letters, must have been obtained by means of the thirty-six squares.

And in the grating the arrangement of the blank squares had been so ingeniously thought out, that for every quarter turn—that is, for the four times the blank squares changed their position—they came in a different place.

It will be seen that this must be so ; for if at the first application of the grating to white paper the figures 1 to 9 are inscribed in each blank space, and then, after a quarter turn, the figures 10 to 18, then, after another quarter turn, the figures 19 to 27, and then, after another quarter turn, the figures 28 to 36, it will be found that no square has two numbers, and that each of the thirty-six squares is filled in. Sarcany very naturally began on the six first words of the message, intending to make four successive applications of the grating. He then thought of treating the next six, and then the six finals in the same way, and thus use up the eighteen words of the cryptogram.

It need scarcely be said that Sarcany had told Toronthal what he intended to do, and that the banker had approved of the plan.

Would the practice confirm the theory ? Therein lay all the interest of the experiment.

The eighteen words of the message were these:—

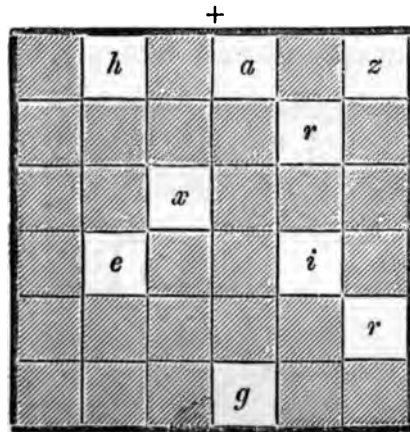
<i>ihnalz</i>	<i>zaemen</i>	<i>ruiopn</i>
<i>arnuro</i>	<i>trvree</i>	<i>mtqssl</i>
<i>odxhnp</i>	<i>estlev</i>	<i>eeuart</i>
<i>aeeeil</i>	<i>ennios</i>	<i>noupvg</i>
<i>spesdr</i>	<i>erssur</i>	<i>ouitse</i>
<i>redgnc</i>	<i>tocedt</i>	<i>artuee</i>

At first they set to work to decipher the first six words. To do this Sarcany wrote them out on a sheet of white paper, taking care so to space the letters and lines as to bring each letter under one of the squares of the grating.

And this was the result :—

<i>i</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>z</i>
<i>a</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>o</i>
<i>o</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>a</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>l'</i>
<i>s</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>c</i>

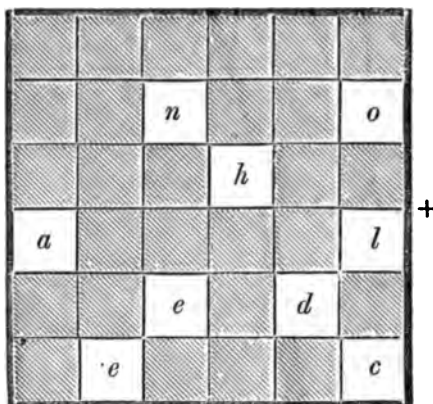
Then the grating was placed over the letters so that the little cross was on top, and then through the nine openings there appeared the nine letters shown below, while the other twenty-seven were hidden :—



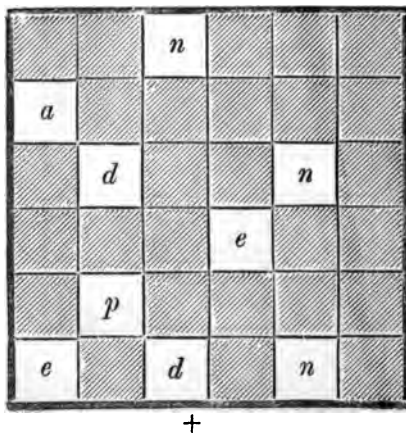
CHAPTER VI.

CAN THE CIPHER BE SOLVED?

THEN Sarcany made a quarter turn of the grating from right to left, so as to bring the side with the cross to the right. And these were the letters that appeared through the spaces :—

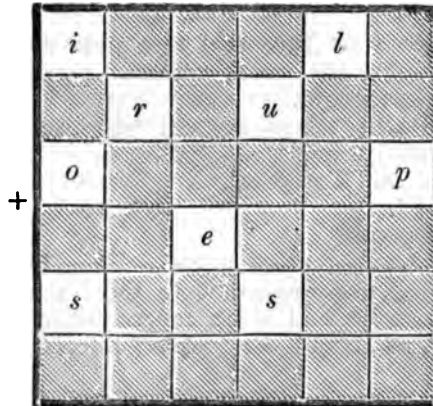


At the third attempt the letters visible were these :—



To the astonishment of Toronthal and Sarcany, none of these combinations gave any sense. They endeavoured to read them consecutively in the order they had been obtained, but they proved as meaningless as the despatch itself. Was the message to remain indecipherable?

The fourth application of the grating resulted thus :—



—which was as obscure as the others.

In fact, the four words which had been discovered were :—

hazrxeing
nohaledec
nadnepedn
ilruopess

And these meant—nothing.

Sarcany could not conceal his rage at such a disappointment. The banker shook his head, and remarked, in a slight tone of irony,—

“Perhaps that is not the grating!”

Sarcany simply writhed in his chair.

“Let us try again!” he said.

“Try again,” said Toronthal.

Sarcany, having mastered his nervous agitation, began experimenting on the six words forming the second column of the message. Four times did he apply the

grating ; and these are the four meaningless words that he obtained :—

amnetnore
velessuot
etseirled
zerreones

This time Sarcany threw the grating on to the table with an oath.

In curious contrast Toronthal kept quite cool. He was carefully studying the words hitherto obtained, and remained deep in thought.

"Confound all gratings and all who use them!" exclaimed Sarcany, rising.

"Sit down," said Toronthal.

"Sit down?"

"Yes; and go on."

Sarcany gave Toronthal a look. Then he sat down, took the grating, and applied it to the last six words of the message, as he had done to the others. He did it mechanically, as though he took no interest in what he was doing.

And the words given by the four applications of the grating were :—

uonsuoveu
qlangisre
imerpuate
rptsetuot

That was all. The words were as meaningless as the others.

Sarcany, enraged beyond all bounds, took the paper on which he had written the barbarous words which the grating had yielded, and was about to tear it into tatters, when Toronthal stopped him.

"Do not get excited," he said.

"Eh!" exclaimed Sarcany, "what can you do with an insoluble logogriph like that?"

"Write all those words in a line, one after the other," said the banker.

"And why?"

"To see."

Sarcany obeyed ; and he obtained the following :—

*hazrxeirgnohaledecnadnepednilruopessamnetnorevelessuotet
seirtedzerrevnesuonsuoveuqlangisreimerpuaterptsetuot*

The letters had scarcely been written before Toronthal snatched the paper from Sarcany, and read it, and gave a shout. It was the banker now who lost his head. Sarcany thought he had gone mad.

“Read!” said Toronthal, holding out the paper to Sarcany. “Read!”

“Read!”

“Yes! don’t you see that, before they used the grating, Count Sandorf’s correspondents wrote the letter backwards?”

Sarcany took the paper, and this is what he read, proceeding from the last letter to the first :—

“Tout est prêt. Au premier signal que vous nous enverrez de Trieste, tous se lèveront en masse pour l’indépendance de la Hongrie. Xrzah.”

“And the four last letters?” he asked.

“An agreed-upon signature, or something to fill up,” said Toronthal.

“Oh, then! {All is ready. At the first signal you send us from Trieste, all of us will rise together for the independence of Hungary})’ That is it, is it? Well, we have got them at last!”

“But the police have not got them!”

“That is my business.”

“You will act with great secrecy?”

“That is my business,” said Sarcany. “The Governor of Trieste shall be the only person to know the names of the two honest patriots who have nipped in its bud this conspiracy against the empire of Austria!”

And as he spoke, the mockery of each tone and gesture betrayed the true feeling with which he uttered the words.

“And now I have nothing else to do,” said the banker.

“Nothing,” answered Sarcany, “except to take your share of the profit.”

“When?”

“When the three heads fall which are worth a million a piece.”

Toronthal and Sarcany bid each other adieu. If they wished to gain anything out of the secret that chance had

handed over to them, they must be quick and denounce the conspirators before the plot broke out.

Sarcany returned to Zathmar's house as if nothing had occurred, and went on with the accounts. His work was nearly finished. Count Sandorf, in thanking him for the zeal he had shown, told him that he should not require his services after the next eighteen days.

To Sarcany's mind this meant that about that time the signal was to be given from Trieste to the chief Hungarian towns.

He continued therefore to watch with the greatest care, but so as to give rise to no suspicion, all that took place in Zathmar's house. And he played his part so well, he seemed so imbued with liberal ideas, and had taken so little pains to hide the invincible repulsion he said he felt for the Germans, that Sandorf had thought of giving him a post later on, when the rising should have made Hungary a free country. It was not so with Borik, who had never got over the first feeling of dislike with which the young man had inspired him.

Sarcany neared his triumph.

It was on the 9th of June that Count Sandorf had agreed with his friends to give the signal, and the 8th had come.

But the informer had been at work.

In the evening, about eight o'clock, the police suddenly entered Zathmar's house. Resistance was impossible. Count Sandorf, Count Zathmar, Professor Bathory, Sarcany himself, who made no protest, and Borik, were secretly arrested.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIAL.

ISTRIA, which became part of Austria-Hungary in accordance with the treaty of 1815, is a triangular peninsula, of which the isthmus forms the base. This peninsula extends from the Gulf of Trieste to the Gulf of Quarnero; and *along its coast-line* are several harbours. Amongst others,

almost at the extreme southern point is Pola, which the Government were then forming into a dockyard and arsenal of the first rank.

The province, more especially on its western coast, is still Italian, and even Venetian in its customs and language. The Slave element still struggles with the Italian element, and the German element has some difficulty in maintaining its influence.

There are several important towns on the coast and in the interior. Amongst these are Capo d'Istria and Pirano, whose population is almost entirely employed in the salt works at the mouths of the Risano and Corna-Lunga ; Parenzo, the headquarters of the Istrian Diet and the residence of the bishop ; Rovigno, rich in its olive-trees ; and Pola, where tourists find interest in the superb monuments of Roman origin, and which is destined to become the most important military port in the Adriatic.

But neither of these towns has the right to call itself the capital of Istria. The place that bears that title is Pisino, situated almost in the centre of the triangle, and thither, unknown to them, the prisoners were about to be taken after their secret arrest.

At the door of Zathmar's house a post-chaise was waiting. The four prisoners entered it, and two of the Austrian police, who were put in charge during the journey, took their places beside them. They were thus prevented from exchanging a word which might in any way compromise them or lead to a mutual understanding before their appearance in the dock.

An escort of twelve mounted gendarmes, commanded by a lieutenant, took up their positions in front, behind, and at the doors of the carriage ; and ten minutes afterwards they were out of the town. Borik was taken direct to the prison at Trieste, and there put into solitary confinement.

Where were the prisoners going ? In what fortress of the Austrian Government were they to be lodged, since the castle at Trieste was not to receive them ? Count Sandorf and his friends would have been glad to know, but they tried to discover in vain.

The night was dark. By the light of the carriage lamps only the first rank of the mounted escort could be seen. —The pace was rapid.— Sandorf, Bathory, and Zathmar remained motionless and silent in their corners. Sarcany

did not seek to break the silence, either to protest against his arrest, or to ask why the arrest had been made.

After leaving Trieste the post-chaise made a bend which took it obliquely towards the coast. Count Sandorf, amid the noise of the trotting horses and the jingling sabres, could hear the distant murmur of the surf on the rocks along the shore. For a moment a few lights shone out in the night, and almost immediately disappeared. This was the small town of Muggia, which the post-chaise had just passed without halting. Then Sandorf noticed that the road lay into the interior.

At eleven o'clock the chaise stopped to change horses. It was only at a farm, where the horses were waiting ready to be harnessed. It was not a post-station.

The escort resumed its journey. The carriage passed along a road among the vineyards where the vines interlaced themselves in festoons to the branches of the mulberry trees. The road was flat, and the carriage made rapid progress. The darkness now grew more profound, for heavy clouds, brought up by a violent sirocco from the south-east, covered the sky; and although the windows were let down from time to time to admit a little fresh air—for the nights are warm in Istria—it was impossible to distinguish anything, even close at hand. Although Sandorf and his friends noted every incident on the road, the direction of the wind, and the time elapsed since their departure, they could not discover the direction in which the carriage was travelling. The object was doubtless to keep it as secret as possible, so that their place of confinement should not be known to the public.

About two o'clock in the morning they again changed horses. As at the first change, the halt did not last five minutes.

Count Sandorf thought he could make out in the gloom a few houses at the end of a road, as though on the extreme outskirts of a town.

This was Buje, the chief place of a district situated about twenty miles south of Muggia.

As soon as the horses were put-to, the lieutenant spoke a few words to the postillion in a low tone, and the chaise set off at a gallop.

About half-past three o'clock the day began to dawn. *An hour later the position of the rising sun would have*



The pace was rapid. Page 42

shown them the direction in which they were going, but the police shut down the shutters, and the interior of the carriage was plunged into complete darkness.

Neither Count Sandorf nor his friends made the least observation. It would not have been replied to ; that was quite certain. The best thing to do was to submit and wait.

An hour or two afterwards—it was difficult to reckon how the time went—the post-chaise stopped for the last time, and the change of horses was very quickly performed, at Visinada.

As they left here, all that could be noticed was that the road had become very hard. The shouts of the postillion, the cracking of his whip, incessantly urged the horses forward, and the shoes rattled on the hard stony ground of a mountainous region. A few hills with little clumps of greyish trees could be made out on the horizon. Two or three times the prisoners heard the sounds of a flute. They came from the young shepherds who were playing their curious tunes as they gathered together their flocks of black goats ; but this afforded no sufficient indication of the country the prisoners were passing through. That had to be found out without seeing it.

About nine o'clock the chaise went off in quite a different direction. Unless they were mistaken, they were descending rapidly after having reached the highest point of their journey. The speed was much increased, and occasionally the wheels had to be skidded.

In fact, after leading through the hilly country commanded by Mont Majeur, the road drops down obliquely as it approaches Pisino. Although the town is very much above sea-level, it seems to be in a deep valley, to judge from the neighbouring hills. Some distance before it is reached, the campanile above the houses picturesquely grouped on the hill-side becomes visible.

Pisino is the chief place of the district, and contains about 24,000 inhabitants. It is situated almost in the centre of the peninsula, and, particularly at fair-time, a large business is done among the mixed population of Morlaques, Slaves of different tribes, and even Tsiganes, who flourish there.

The capital of Istria is an old city, and has retained its feudal character. This strikingly appears in the ancient castle, which towers above several more modern military

establishments where the administration of the Government is carried on.

It was in the courtyard of this castle that the post-chaise stopped on the 9th of June, about ten o'clock in the morning, after a journey of fifteen hours. Count Sandorf, his two companions, and Sarcany left the vehicle, and a few minutes afterwards were shown into separate vaulted cells.

Although they had had no communication with each other, and had not been able to exchange ideas in any way, yet Sandorf, Zathmar, and Bathory were all engaged in pondering over the same subject. How had the secret of the plot been discovered? Had the police come on the track by chance? There had recently been no correspondence between Trieste and the Hungarian and Transylvanian towns. Was there a traitor in the camp? But who could be the traitor? Confidence had been placed in none. There were no papers to fall into a spy's hands. All the documents had been destroyed. Had they rummaged the most secret corners of the Acquedotto they would have found not a single suspicious note! And that is what had happened. The police had discovered nothing—except the grating which Zathmar had not destroyed in case he wanted it for future use. But unhappily the grating was serious evidence, for it was impossible to explain its use except as a means of ciphered correspondence.

In fact everything rested on the copy of the message that Sarcany, with Toronthal's connivance, had handed over to the Governor of Trieste after having made out its real meaning. But unfortunately that was quite enough to make good the accusation of conspiring against the State; and it had been decided to bring Count Sandorf and his friends before a special tribunal, a military tribunal, which would proceed in military fashion.

Sarcany's game was a deep one, and he played it with the coolness and deliberation that distinguished him. He had allowed himself to be arrested, to be convicted, if need be, on the understanding that he should receive a pardon; and in this way he hoped to disarm suspicion.

Sandorf was completely deceived by him—and who would not have been?—and resolved to do his utmost to clear him of the charge. It would not be difficult, he thought, to show that Sarcany had taken no part in the conspiracy, that he was merely an accountant only recently introduced

into Zathmar's house to arrange certain private matters which in no way had reference to the plot. If needful, he would call Silas Toronthal to testify to the young man's innocence. There could be no doubt, therefore, that Sarcany would be found innocent of having been either a principal or accessory, in the event of the prosecution being persisted in.

The Austrian Government knew nothing of the conspiracy beyond what they heard at Trieste. The conspirators in Hungary and Transylvania remained absolutely unknown. There was no trace in existence of their complicity in the plot. Sandorf, Bathory, and Zathmar need have felt no anxiety on this head. As far as they were concerned, they had made up their minds to deny everything until some material evidence was produced. In that case they knew that their lives were forfeit. Others would one day take up the movement that had now proved abortive. The cause of independence would find new leaders. If they were convicted, they would avow what had been their hopes. They would show the object at which they had aimed, and which one day or the other would be attained.

It was not without some reason that Count Sandorf and his two friends thought that the action of the police had been much restricted in the matter. At Buda, at Pesth, at Klausenburg, in all the towns in which the rising was to take place at the signal from Trieste, inquiries had been made in vain. That was why the Government had arrested the chiefs so secretly at Trieste. They had sent them to Pisino, and desired that nothing should be known of the matter, in the hope that something would happen to betray the senders of the cipher message. The hope was not realized. The expected signal was not given. The movement was stopped for a time at least. The Government had to content itself with trying Sandorf and his companions for high treason.

The inquiries took several days; and it was not till the 20th of June that the proceedings began with the examination of the accused. They were not even confronted with each other, and were only to meet before their judges.

The chiefs of the Trieste conspiracy were, as we have said, to be tried before a court-martial. The proceedings before such a court never take long, the trial is conducted very quickly, and there is no delay in the execution of the sentence.

It was so in this matter.

On the 25th of June, the court-martial met in one of the lower rooms of the fortress of Pisino, and the accused were brought before it. The proceedings did not take very long, and nothing startling was discovered.

The court opened at nine o'clock in the morning. Count Sandorf, Count Zathmar, and Professor Bathory, on the one side, and Sarcany on the other, saw each other for the first time since their imprisonment. The clasp of the hand which Sandorf and his friends interchanged as they met, gave yet another proof of their unanimity. A sign from Zathmar, and Bathory gave Sandorf to understand that they left it to him to speak for them. Neither would undertake the defence. All Sandorf had done up till then had been well done. All that he thought fit to say to the judges would be well said.

The hearing was a public one, in the sense that the doors of the room were open. But few persons were present, for the affair had not yet transpired; and the spectators, some twenty in number, belonged to the staff of the castle.

The identity of the accused was first proved. Then, immediately afterwards, Sandorf asked the president the name of the place which he and his companions had been brought for trial, but no reply was given to the question.

The identity of Sarcany was likewise established. He still did nothing to distinguish his case from that of his companions.

Then the fac-simile of the message handed over to the police was produced; and the accused were asked if they remembered receiving the original. They replied that it was the duty of the prosecution to prove that they received it.

At this reply the grating which had been found in Zathmar's desk was produced.

Sandorf and his companions could not deny that the grating had been in their possession. They did not try to. To such material evidence, there was no reply. The application of the grating permitted the cryptographic letter to be read, and the letter must consequently have been received.

And thus they learnt how the secret of the conspiracy had been discovered, and the basis on which the prosecution was originated.

From this time forward question and answer passed rapidly, and clearly told the story.

Sandorf denied nothing. He spoke on behalf of his two friends. A movement intended to bring about the separation of Hungary from Austria, and the autonomic reconstitution of the kingdom of the ancient Magyars had been organized by them. Had they not been arrested, it would shortly have broken out, and Hungary would have reconquered its independence. Sandorf claimed to be the chief of the conspiracy, and insisted that his fellow-prisoners were merely his agents. But Zathmar and Bathory protested against this contention, and claimed the honour of having been his accomplices, and desired to share his fate.

When the president interrogated the prisoners as to their dealings with others, they refused to reply. Not a name was given.

"You have now three heads," said Sandorf, "and that must be enough for you."

Three heads only, for Sandorf then set himself to exculpating Sarcany, a young clerk employed in Count Zathmar's house on the recommendation of Silas Toronthal.

Sarcany could only confirm what Sandorf stated. He knew nothing of the conspiracy. He had been greatly surprised to learn that in this quiet house in the Acquadotto a plot was in progress against the safety of the State. If he had made no protest when he was arrested, it was because he had no idea what it was all about.

Neither Count Sandorf nor Sarcany had any difficulty in proving this—and it is probable that the court had already made up its mind in the matter. At the suggestion of the judge-advocate the charge against Sarcany was there and then abandoned.

By two o'clock in the afternoon the pleadings were all over, and the sentence was given without even an adjournment.

Count Mathias Sandorf, Count Ladislas Zathmar, and Professor Stephen Bathory were found guilty of high treason against the State, and sentenced to death.

The prisoners were to be shot in the courtyard of the castle.

The execution was to take place within forty-eight hours. Sarcany was to be kept in custody until the closing of the gaol books, which would not take place until after the execution of the sentence.

By the same judgment all the possessions of the prisoners were confiscated.

The prisoners were then removed.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE SENTENCE.

SARCANY was taken back to the cell he occupied at the bottom of an elliptic corridor on the second floor of the donjon. Sandorf and his two friends, during the last hours of life that remained to them, were quartered in a large cell on the same level, exactly at the end of the major axis of the ellipse which this corridor made. The secret was now known. The condemned were to be left together until their execution.

This was a consolation, even a pleasure for them, when they found themselves alone and allowed to give way to feelings which they could not at first restrain.

"My friends," said Sandorf, "I am the cause of your deaths! But I have nothing to ask your pardon for! We worked for the independence of Hungary! Our cause was just! It is our duty to defend her! It is an honour to die for her!"

"Mathias," said Bathory, "we thank you for having associated us with you in the patriotic work which would have been the work of all your life—"

"As we are associated with you in death!" added Zathmar.

Then, during a momentary silence, the three gazed round the gloomy cell in which they were to spend their last hours. A narrow window some four or five feet high, cut through the thick wall of the donjon, let in a certain amount of light. There were three iron bedsteads, a few chairs, a table, and a shelf or two, on which were a few articles of crockery.

Zathmar and Bathory were soon lost in thought.

Sandorf began to walk up and down the cell.

Zathmar was alone in the world, had no family ties, and

no near relations. There was only his old servant, Borik to mourn for him.

It was not so with Bathory. His death would not only prove a blow to himself. He had a wife and son, whom it would reach. That wife and child might even die! And if they survived him, how were they to live? What was to be the future of a penniless woman and her eight-year-old child? Had Bathory possessed any property, how much of it would remain after a judgment which directed it to be confiscated, and sentenced him to death?

As for Sandorf, all his past life returned to him! His wife came to him! His little daughter came—a child of two years old, now left to the care of the steward. And there were his friends whom he had led to ruin! He asked himself if he had done well, if he had not gone farther than his duty towards his country required. Would that the punishment had fallen on him alone, and not upon those that were innocent!

"No! no! I have only done my duty!" he said to himself. "My country before all, and above all!"

At five o'clock a warder entered the cell, placed the dinner on the table, and went out again without saying a word. Sandorf would have liked to know in what fortress he was kept a prisoner, but as the president of the court-martial had not thought fit to answer the question it was quite certain that the warder would not give the information.

The prisoners hardly touched the dinner which had been prepared for them. They passed the rest of the day talking on various matters, in the hope that their abortive movement would one day be resumed. Very often they returned to the incidents of the trial.

"We now know," said Zathmar, "why we have been arrested, and how the police discovered us from that letter which they came across."

"Yes, Ladislav," said Sandorf, "but into whose hands did that message, which was one of the last we received, at first fall, and who copied it?"

"And when it was copied," added Bathory, "how did they read it without the grating?"

"The grating must have been stolen," said Sandorf.

"Stolen! and by whom?" asked Zathmar. "The day we were arrested it was still in the drawer in my desk, whence the police took it."

This was, indeed, inexplicable. That the letter had been found on the pigeon, that it had been copied before being sent to its destination, that the house where the person to whom it was addressed had been discovered,—all that could be explained. But that the cryptographic despatch could have been deciphered without the grating by which it had been formed was incomprehensible.

"And besides," continued Sandorf, "we know that the letter was read, and it could not have been read without the grating! It was this letter which put the police on our traces, and it was on it that the whole charge was based."

"It matters very little, after all," answered Bathory.

"On the contrary, it does matter," said Sandorf. "We may have been betrayed! And if there has been a traitor—not to know—"

Sandorf suddenly stopped. The name of Sarcany occurred to him; but he abandoned the thought at once without caring to communicate it to his companions.

Far into the night Sandorf and his companions continued their conversation on all that was unintelligible with regard to these matters.

In the morning they were awakened from sound sleep by the entry of the warder. It was the morning of their last day but one. The execution was fixed to take place in twenty-four hours from then.

Bathory asked the warder if he might be permitted to see his family.

The warder replied that he had no orders on the subject. It was not likely that the Government would consent to give the prisoners this last consolation, inasmuch as they had conducted the affair throughout with the greatest secrecy, and not even the name of the fortress which served them as a prison had been revealed.

"If we write letters, will they be forwarded?" asked Sandorf.

"I will bring you paper, pens, and ink," replied the warder; "and I promise to give your letters into the Governor's hands."

"We are much obliged to you," said Sandorf. "If you do that, you do all you can! How shall we reward you?"

"Your thanks are sufficient, gentlemen," said the warder, who could not conceal his emotion.

He soon brought in the writing materials. The prisoners

spent the greater part of the day in making their last arrangements. Sandorf said all that a father's heart could prompt in his instructions regarding his baby girl, who would soon be an orphan; Bathory all that a husband and father could think of in bidding a loving farewell to his wife and son; Zathmar all that a master could say to an old servant who remained his only friend.

But during the day, although absorbed in their writing, how many times did they stop to listen! How many times did they seek to discover if some distant noise was not coming along the corridors of the donjon! How many times did it seem to them as though the door of their cell had opened, and that they were to be permitted one last embrace of wife, son, or daughter! That would have been some consolation! But, in truth, the pitiless order deprived them of this last adieu and spared them the heart-rending scene.

The door did not open. Doubtless neither Madame Bathory nor her son, nor the steward, Lendeck, to whose care Sandorf's daughter had been given, knew any more where the prisoners had been taken to after their arrest than Borik in his prison at Trieste. Doubtless, also, neither knew of the doom in store for the conspirators.

Thus passed the earlier hours of the day. Occasionally Sandorf and his friends would talk for a while. Occasionally they would be silent for some time, and then the whole of their lives would be lived over again in their memories with an intensity of impression quite supernatural. It was not with the past, as affecting the past, that they were entirely concerned; the recollections seemed all to shape themselves with a view to the present. Was it, then, a prescience of that eternity which was about to open on them, of that incomprehensible and incommensurate state of things which is called the infinite?

Bathory and Zathmar abandoned themselves without reserve to their reveries, but Sandorf was invincibly dominated by an idea which had taken possession of him. He could not doubt but what there had been treachery in this mysterious affair. For a man of his character to die without punishing the traitor, whoever he was, without knowing even who had betrayed him, was to die twice over. Who had got hold of this message to which the police owed the discovery of the conspiracy and the arrest of the conspirators? Who had read it, who had given?

up, who had sold it, perhaps? Pondering over this insoluble problem, Sandorf's excited brain became a prey to a sort of fever. And while his friends wrote on, or remained silent and motionless, he strode about, uneasy and agitated, pacing the floor of his cell like a wild beast shut up in a cage.

A phenomenon—strange, but not unintelligible in accordance with acoustical law—came at last to his aid and whispered the secret he had despaired of discovering.

Several times he had stopped short as he turned at the angle which the dividing wall of the cell made with the main wall of the corridor, on to which the different cells opened. In this angle, just where the door was hinged, he seemed to hear a murmur of voices, distant and hardly recognizable. At first he paid no attention to this, but suddenly a name was pronounced—his own—and he listened intently. At once he detected an acoustical phenomenon, such as is observable in the interiors of galleries and domes, or under vaults of ellipsoidal form. The voice, travelling from one point of the ellipse, after following the contour of the walls without being perceptible at any intermediate point, is plainly heard at the other focus. Such is the phenomenon met with in the crypts of the Pantheon, in Paris, in the interior of the dome of St. Peter's, at Rome, and in the whispering gallery at St. Paul's, in London. The faintest word uttered at one focus of these curves is distinctly heard at the focus opposite.

There could be no doubt that two or more persons were talking either in the corridor or in a cell situated at the end of the diameter, the focal point of which was close to the door of the cell occupied by Sandorf.

By a sign he called his two companions to him. The three stood listening.

Fragments of phrases distinctly reached their ears; phrases broken off and dying away as every now and then the speakers moved from and towards the point whose position determined the phenomenon.

And these are the phrases they heard at different intervals:—

“To-morrow, after the execution, you will be free.”

“And then Count Sandorf's goods we share—”

"Without me you would never have deciphered that message."

"And without me, if I had not taken it from the pigeon, you would never have got hold of it—"

"Well, no one would suspect that the police owe—"

"Even the prisoners have no suspicion."

"Neither relatives nor friends are coming to see them."

"To-morrow, Sarcany—"

"To-morrow, Silas Toronthal."

Then the voices were silent, and the sound of a door being shut was heard.

"Sarcany! Silas Toronthal!" exclaimed Sandorf. "That is where it came from!"

He looked at his friends, and was quite pale. His heart stopped beating in the grip of the spasm. His eyes dilated, his neck stiffened, his head sank back to his shoulders—everything showed that his energetic nature was in the grasp of terrible anger, excited to its furthest extreme.

"Those two! The scoundrels! Those two!" he repeated with a sort of roar.

Then he collected himself, looked round him, and strode across the cell.

"Escape! Escape!" he exclaimed. "We must escape!"

And this man, who would have walked bravely to death a few hours later, this man who had never even thought of making an effort for his life, this man had now but one thought—to live, and live to punish those two traitors, Sarcany and Toronthal!

"Yes! To be revenged!" exclaimed Bathory and Zathmar.

"To be revenged? No! To do justice!"

All Count Sandorf was in those words.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DONJON OF PISINO.

THE fortress of Pisino is one of the most curious specimens of those formidable buildings which arose in the Middle Ages. It has a fine feudal aspect. It only wants the knights in its vaulted halls and the ladies in their long brocaded robes and pointed bonnets at its arched windows, and the archers and crossbowmen on its machicolations, its battlemented galleries, its mangonels at the embrasures, its portcullis, and its drawbridges. The stonework is still intact ; but the governor with his Austrian uniform, the soldiers with their modern weapons, the warders and turnkeys who no longer wear the particoloured costume, half-yellow and half-red, of the old days, strike a false note in the midst of all this magnificence of the past.

It was from the donjon of this fortress that Count Sandorf was endeavouring to escape during the last hours before his execution. A mad attempt, no doubt ; for the prisoners did not even know in what part of the donjon their prison lay, nor anything of the country across which they would have to journey after their escape.

And perhaps it was fortunate that their ignorance was complete in the matter. Had they known more, they might have recoiled before the difficulties, to say nothing of the impossibilities, of such an enterprise.

It is not that this province of Istria offers no favourable chances for an escape, for no matter what direction the fugitives took, they would reach the sea-coast in a few hours. It is not that the streets of Pisino are so carefully guarded that there is a risk of being arrested at the very first step. But to escape from the fortress, and particularly from the donjon occupied by the prisoners, had up to then been considered impossible. Even the idea had never occurred to any one.

The situation and exterior arrangement of the donjon in the fortress of Pisino were as follows :—The donjon occupies one side of the terrace with which the town here ends. Leaning over the parapet of this terrace, the eye plunges into a deep ravine, whose rugged sides, covered with *thick entanglements* of creepers, are cut down perpendicularly. *Nothing* overhangs the wall ; there is not a step to

enable any one to ascend or descend ; not a fence to halt at ; not a prominence to seize hold upon in any part of it ; nothing but the uncertain lines, smooth, rubbed, and irregular, which mark the oblique cleavage of the rocks. In a word, it is an abyss which attracts, fascinates, and never gives back anything that drops into it.

Above this abyss rises one of the side walls of the donjon, pierced with a few windows giving light to the cells on the different floors. Were a prisoner to lean out of one of these openings, he would recoil with terror, lest vertigo drag him into the void below ! And if he fell, what would be his fate ? His body would be dashed to pieces on the rocks at the bottom, or it would be carried away by the torrent whose current during flood is irresistible.

This abyss is the Buco, as it is called in the district. Through it runs a river known as the Foiba. This river finds its only outlet in a cavern which it has gradually cut out of the rocks, and into which it falls with the impetuosity of a tide-race or a whirlpool. Where does it go as it passes under the town ? No one knows. Where does it reappear ? Of this cavern, or rather this channel, bored in the schists and clays—no one knows the length, the height, or the direction. Who can say what thousands of angles, what forests of pillars supporting the enormous substructure of the fortress and entire city its waters are dashed against in their course ? Many bold explorers, when the water-level has been neither too high nor too low, have taken a light boat and endeavoured to descend the Foiba through the gloomy tunnel, but the arches have been too low, and have soon interposed an impracticable obstacle. In fact, nothing was known of this subterranean river. Perhaps it was lost in some still deeper cavern, and perhaps it entered the Adriatic below the tide-mark.

Such, then, was the Buco, of which Count Sandorf did not even know the existence ; and as the only escape was by the window of his cell, which opened above the Buco, he would be almost as certain to meet his death there as if he stood in front of the firing party on the morning of his execution.

Zathmar and Bathory waited but for the time to act, ready to remain behind, if necessary, and sacrifice themselves to help Count Sandorf, or ready to follow him, if their flight would not hamper his.

"We'll all three go," said Sandorf. "Wait till we get out before we separate!"

Eight o'clock then struck from the clock in the town. The prisoners had only twelve hours to live.

Night began to close in—a night which promised to be very dark. Thick, almost motionless, clouds unrolled themselves cumbrously across the sky. The atmosphere was heavy, almost unbreathable, and saturated with electricity. A violent storm was coming on. Lightning had not yet passed between these masses of vapour, heaped around like so many accumulators, but distant growlings were heard along the summits of the hills that encircle Pisino.

Under such circumstances there was some chance of success, if an unknown gulf had not gaped beneath the feet of the fugitives. In a dark night they might not be seen. In a wild night they might not be heard.

As Sandorf had instantly recognized, flight was only possible through the window of the cell. To force the door, to cut into its strong planks of oak, all bound and ironed, was not to be dreamt of. Besides, the step of a sentinel resounded on the flags of the corridor. And once the door was cleared, how were they to find their way through the labyrinth of the fortress? How were they to pass the portcullis and drawbridges, at which there were always so many men on guard? On the side of the Buco there was no sentinel; but the Buco was a better defence to the face of the donjon than a cordon of sentries.

Sandorf then went to the window and examined it, to see if they could squeeze through.

This window was exactly three and half feet wide and two feet high. The gap widened as it ran outwards through the wall, which hereabouts was nearly four feet thick. A solid crossbar of iron guarded it. It was fixed in the side near the interior opening. There were none of those wooden boards which allow the light only to enter from above, for they would have been useless, owing to the position of the opening. If then the crossbar could be removed or displaced, it would be easy to get through the window, which was not unlike an embrasure in a fortress wall.

But once the passage was free, how were they to make the descent down the perpendicular side? By a ladder? *The prisoners had not one, and could not make one.* By

the bed-clothes? They had only the heavy woollen counterpanes thrown on the mattresses which lay on the iron frames fixed to the wall. It would have been impossible to have escaped by the window, if Count Sandorf had not noticed a chain, or rather an iron-rope, hanging outside, which might aid them to escape.

The cable was the lightning-conductor fixed to the crest of the roof above the side of the donjon, the wall of which rose straight from the Buco.

"Do you see that cable?" said Count Sandorf to his two friends. "You must have the pluck to use it, if you want to escape!"

"The pluck we have," said Zathmar, "but have we the strength?"

"What does it matter?" replied Bathory; "if strength fail us, we shall die an hour or two sooner, that is all!"

"There is no need to die, Stephen," said Sandorf. "Listen to me, and you also, Ladislav; do not miss any of my words. If we possessed a rope, we should not hesitate to hang ourselves outside the window, so that we might slip down it to the ground. Now this cable is better than a rope, because its rigidity will render its descent much easier. Like all lightning-conductors, there is no doubt but that it is fastened to the wall with staples. These staples will be fixed points on which our feet may find a rest. There is no swinging to dread, because the cable is fixed to the wall. There is no vertigo to fear, because it is night, and you will see nothing. Then, once through the window, we have only to keep our coolness and courage and we are free. That we risk our lives is possible. But it gives us ten chances to one; whereas, if we wait till the morning, and our keepers find us here, it is hundreds upon hundreds to one that we have to die!"

"Be it so," replied Zathmar.

"Where does the cable end?" asked Bathory.

"In a well probably," answered Sandorf, "but certainly outside the donjon, and we'll take advantage of it. I do not know. I only see one thing at the end of it, and that is liberty—perhaps!"

Count Sandorf was right in his supposition that the lightning-conductor was fastened to the wall by staples at equal distances. The descent would thus be easy, for the fugitives could use the staples as stepping-stones to keep them from sliding down too swiftly. But what they did

not know was that when it left the crest of the plateau on which rose the wall of the donjon, the iron cable became free, floating, abandoned in the void, and its lower end plunged into the waters of the Fciba, then swollen by recent rains. Where they reckoned on finding firm ground at the bottom of the gorge was a foaming torrent, leaping impetuously into the caverns of the Buco. If they had known this, would they then have recoiled from their attempted escape? No.

"Death for death," said Sandorf. "We may die after doing all we can to escape death."

The first thing was to clear the passage through the window. The crossbar that obstructed it would have to be removed. How was this to be done without a pair of pincers, a wrench, or any other tool? The prisoners had not even a knife.

"The rest will not be difficult," said Sandorf, "but that may prove impossible! To work!"

And he climbed up to the window, seized the crossbar vigorously with his hand, and felt that it would not require such a very great effort to pull it down.

The iron bars which formed it were loose in their sockets. The stone, split away at the edges, did not offer very much resistance. Probably the lightning-conductor, before it was repaired, had been in inferior condition for its purpose, and electric sparks had been attracted by the iron of the crossbar, and had acted on the wall; and how powerful such influence would be we are well aware. This may have been the cause of the breakages round the sockets into which the ends of the bars were thrust, and of the decomposition of the stone, which was reduced to a sort of spongy state, as if it had been pierced by millions of electric points.

This explanation was given by Stephen Bathory as soon as he noticed the phenomenon.

But it was not explanation, but work that was wanted, and that without losing a moment. If they could manage to clear the extremities of the bars after forcing them backwards and forwards in their sockets, so as to knock off the angles of the stone, it might be easy to push the ironwork out of the embrasure, which widened as it went outwards. The noise of the fall was not likely to be heard amid the long rollings of the thunder which were going on almost *continuously in the lower strata of the clouds.*

"But we shall never get that ironwork out with our hands," said Zathmar.

"No!" answered Sandorf. "We ought to have a piece of iron, a blade—"

Something of the sort was necessary, there could be no doubt. Friable as the wall might be round the sockets, the nails would be broken, and the fingers worn till they bled in trying to reduce it to powder. It could never be done without some hard point or other.

Sandorf looked round the cell, which was feebly lighted from the corridor by the small fanlight over the door. Then he felt the walls, on the chance of a nail having been left in them. He found nothing. Then it occurred to him that it would not be impossible to take off one of the legs of the iron bedsteads, which were fixed to the wall. The three set to work, and soon Bathory called to his companions in a whisper.

The rivet of one of the metal laths forming the lattice-work of the bed had given way. All that was necessary was to seize hold of this by the free end and twist it backwards and forwards until it broke off.

This was soon done. Sandorf thus obtained a thin piece of iron, about an inch wide and five inches long, which he wrapped round the end with his silk cravat, and with it he began to clear away the four sockets.

This could not be done without some noise. Fortunately the rumbling of the thunder prevented the noise from being heard. During the intervals of silence Sandorf stopped, to resume his task as soon as the storm began again. The work advanced rapidly.

Bathory and Zathmar took up their positions near the door and listened, so as to stop him when the sentry went by.

Suddenly a "Sh—sh—sh—" escaped from Zathmar's lips.

The work instantly stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked Bathory.

"Listen," answered Zathmar.

His ear was again at the focus of the ellipsoidal curve, and again there was evident the acoustical phenomenon which had told the prisoners the secret of the treachery.

These are the fragments of speech which were caught at short intervals:—

.

"To-morrow set liberty—"

"Yes books closed and—"

"After the execution I shall rejoin my comrade, Zirone, who is waiting for me in Sicily."

"Yours has been a short visit to the donjon of—"

Evidently Sarcany and a warder were engaged in conversation. Further, Sarcany had pronounced the name of a certain Zirone, who was mixed up in the whole affair. Sandorf made a careful note of the new name.

Unfortunately the last word, which would have been so useful for the prisoners to know, did not reach them. At the end of the last sentence a violent clap of thunder took place, and while the electricity followed the lightning-conductor, a shower of sparks escaped from the strip of metal that Count Sandorf held in his hand. Had it not been for the silk with which he held it he would probably have been affected by the discharge.

And so the last word, the name of the donjon was lost in a loud peal of thunder. The prisoners could not hear it. Had they known in what fortress they were confined, and through what district they would have to make their way, how much greater would have been the chances of an escape attempted under such difficult circumstances !

CHAPTER X.

DOWN THE BUCO.

COUNT SANDORF resumed his task at the window. Three out of the four sockets were already scraped away sufficiently to allow the ends of the crossbar to be moved out of them. The fourth was then attacked by the light of the dazzling flashes which constantly illumined the sky.

At half-past ten o'clock the work was done. The crossbar was clear of the walls, and could be slipped out of the embrasure. It only had to be pushed forward and dropped

on the outside of the wall. And this was done as soon as Zathmar heard that the sentry had reached the far end of the corridor.

The crossbar was moved along the embrasure. It fell over and vanished.

At the moment there was a lull in the storm. Sandorf listened to hear when the heavy frame struck the ground. He heard not a sound!

"The donjon is built on a high rock which rises from the valley," remarked Bathory.

"The height does not matter!" answered Sandorf. "There can be no doubt that the lightning-conductor reaches the ground, because that is necessary for it to be of any use. And so we shall reach the ground without the risk of a fall."

The reasoning was right, as a rule, but it was wrong in this instance, for the end of the conductor was plunged in the waters of the Foiba.

The window being clear, the moment for escape had come.

"My friends," said Sandorf, "this is what we had better do. I am the youngest, and, I think, the strongest. It is my place therefore to be the first to go down this iron rope. In case of some obstacle, which is impossible for us to foresee, preventing my reaching the ground, I may have strength enough to climb back to the window. Two minutes after I have gone, Stephen, you get out of the window and follow me. Two minutes after him, Ladislav, you come the same way. When we three have reached the foot of the donjon, we will act according to circumstances."

"We will obey you, Mathias," answered Bathory. "We will do what you tell us to do; we will go where you tell us to go. But we do not like your taking the greatest share of the danger on yourself—"

"Our lives are not worth as much as yours," added Zathmar.

"They are worth quite as much in the face of an act of justice which has to be done," answered Count Sandorf. "And if one of us alone survives, he will be the one to perform that act! Shake hands, my friends!"

And then, while Zathmar went to watch at the door of the cell, Sandorf climbed into the embrasure. A moment afterwards he was hanging in the air. Then, while his knees gripped the iron rope, he slid down, hand under hand, feeling with his feet for the staples on which to rest.

The storm burst forth again with extraordinary violence. It did not rain, but the wind was terrific. Flash overlapped flash. The zigzags crossed and crossed above the donjon, attracted by its isolated position and its towering height. The point of the lightning-rod gleamed with pallid brilliancy as the electricity streamed off in a long spear point of flame, and the cable shook and swung with the furious lashing of the storm.

The risk that was run in hanging on to this conductor, through which the electricity was travelling, to lose itself in the waters of the Buco, was terrible. Had the apparatus been in perfect condition there would have been no danger of a stroke, for the extreme conductibility of the metal compared to that of the human body, which is very much less, would have preserved the daring man who was suspended from it. But if the point of the conductor were blunted, or there were any solution of continuity in the cable, or a rupture occurred at any spot below, a stroke was quite possible due to the meeting of the positive and the negative ; and this without a lightning flash, owing to the tension of the accumulation in the defective apparatus.

Count Sandorf was fully aware of the danger to which he was exposed. A sentiment more powerful than that of the instinct of preservation made him brave it. He slipped down slowly, cautiously, through the electric emanations which enveloped him as in a mist. His foot sought each staple down the wall, and for an instant he paused, and as a blinding flash illumined the abyss beneath him he tried, but in vain, to discover its depth.

When Mathias had descended about sixty feet from the window, he found a firm resting-place. It was a sort of ledge a few inches wide which marked the beginning of the base of the wall. The lightning-conductor did not end here, it went down lower, and—unknown to the fugitive—from this point downwards it was unfastened and floated free, sometimes skirting the rocky wall, sometimes swinging in mid-air, sometimes scraping against the rocks which overhung the abyss.

Count Sandorf stopped to recover his breath. His feet rested on the ledge, his hands grasped the iron cable. He saw that he had reached the first course of the masonry of the donjon. But how far he was above the valley he could not estimate.

"That must be very-deep," he thought.

In fact a few large birds, dazed with the blinding brilliancy of the lightning, were flying round him with heavily flapping wings, and instead of rising sank out of sight beneath his feet. Hence he must be on the brink of a precipice which fell away, deep down below him.

As the birds disappeared he heard a noise above, and by the light of a vivid flash he saw a confused mass detach itself from the wall.

It was Stephen Bathory escaping from the window. He had grasped the conductor and was slowly slipping down to join Count Sandorf. Mathias waited for him, his feet firmly planted on the narrow ledge. There Stephen could wait while he continued the descent.

In a few minutes both were standing on the narrow stonework.

As soon as the thunder ceased for an instant they could speak, and hear each other.

"And Ladislas?" asked Sandorf.

"He will be here in a minute."

"Nothing wrong aloft?"

"Nothing."

"Good! I will make room for Ladislas; and you, Stephen, wait till he reaches you."

"Agreed."

A tremendous flash seemed to envelope them in flame. It seemed as though the electricity coursing through the cable had penetrated their nerves. They thought they had been struck.

"Mathias! Mathias!" exclaimed Bathory, under an impression of terror that he could not master.

"Be cool! I am going down! You will follow!" was Sandorf's reply.

And already he had seized the cable, with the intention of slipping to the first staple below, where he intended to wait for his companion.

Suddenly there were shouts from above. They seemed to come from the window of the cell. Then these words rang out:—

"Save yourselves!"

It was Zathmar's voice.

Immediately a bright light shot from the wall, followed by a sharp report. This time it was not the cable broken by a lightning flash which lit up the gloom; it was not the roar of the thunder which resounded in the air. A gun

had been fired, a chance shot probably from one of the embrasures of the donjon. It was just as much a signal to the guard as if a bullet had been aimed at the fugitives. The escape had been discovered.

The sentry had heard some noise. He had called five or six of the warders and entered the cell. The absence of two of the prisoners had been immediately discovered, the state of the window showed how they had escaped. And Zathmar rushing to the window had given the alarm.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Bathory. "To desert him! Mathias! To desert him!"

A second time there came the discharge of a gun. The report mingled with the roll of the thunder.

"Heaven have pity on him!" said Sandorf. "But we must escape—we must, to avenge him! Come, Stephen, come!"

It was time. Other windows on the lower storey of the donjon were being opened. New discharges lighted them up. Shouts were heard. Perhaps the warders could run round the base of the wall and cut off the retreat of the fugitives! Perhaps they might be shot!

"Come!" exclaimed Sandorf for the last time.

And he slid down the iron cable which Bathory grasped immediately after him.

Then they saw that the rope hung loosely over the abyss. Resting-places, staples, there were none. They were swinging wildly at the end of the rope which cut their hands as it slipped through them. Down they went, with their knees chafing and bleeding, without the power to stop themselves as the bullets whistled past.

For a minute, for eighty feet and more, they glided down—down—asking themselves if the abyss in which they were engulfed were really bottomless. Already the roar of the raging waters below them could be heard. Then they understood that the lightning-conductor led down into the torrent. What was to be done? To climb back to the base of the donjon they could not; their strength was unequal to the task. And death for death, it was better to chance that which waited for them in the depths below.

Suddenly there came a fearful clap of thunder and an intense electric glare. Although the conductor was not struck, yet the tension of the electricity was such that the *iron rope* grew white as a platinum thread beneath the *discharge of a battery* or a pile.

Bathory uttered a cry of despair—and let go.

Sandorf saw him pass him, almost touching him, with his arms wide open.

And then he let go the iron rope which glowed in his hands ; and he fell more than forty feet into the torrent of Foiba which foamed along at the foot of the unknown Buco.

CHAPTER XI.

ALONG THE FOIBA.

It was about eleven o'clock. The clouds had begun to dissolve in drenching showers. Mingled with the rain there fell huge hailstones, which shot into the waters of the Foiba and rattled over the rocks down its sides like the stream of lead from a mitrailleuse. The firing from the embrasures had ceased. Why waste ammunition on the fugitives? The Foiba would only give them up as corpses—if even it did that.

As soon as Count Sandorf fell into the torrent he found himself swept helplessly into the Buco. In a few moments he passed from the intense light with which the electricity filled the ravine into the profoundest darkness. The roar of the waters had taken the place of the roll of the thunder. For into that impenetrable cavern there entered none of the outside light or sounds.

“Help!”

There was a cry. It was Stephen Bathory. The cold of the water had called him back to life, but he could not keep himself afloat, and he would have been drowned had not a vigorous arm seized him as he was sinking.

“I am here! Stephen! Don't be afraid!”

Count Sandorf was by his side, holding him with one hand while he swam with the other.

The position was critical. Bathory could hardly move his limbs. They had been half-paralyzed by the stroke. Although the pain of his burnt hands had been sensibly lessened by their plunge into the cold, the state of inertia into which he had been thrown did not allow of his using them. Had Sandorf abandoned him for a moment he

would have been drowned ; and yet Sandorf had enough to do to save himself.

There was the complete uncertainty as to the direction which this torrent took, the place it ended, the river or sea into which it flowed. Had even Sandorf known that the river was the Foiba the position could not have been more desperate than if he knew what became of its impetuous waters. Bottles thrown into the entrance of the cavern had never come to sight again in any stream on the Istrian peninsula ; perhaps from their having been broken against the rocks in their course, perhaps from having been swept below into some mysterious rift in the earth's crust.

The fugitives were carried along with extreme rapidity—and thus found it easy to keep on the surface. Bathory had become unconscious. He was quite helpless and motionless in the hands of Sandorf, who fought well for both, but felt that all would soon end in his sinking from sheer exhaustion. To the danger of being dashed against some projecting rock, or the side of the cavern, or the hanging prominences of the roof, there was added that of being sucked down in one of the whirlpools which foamed in many a corner where a sharp angle of the bank gave the current a sudden curve. Twenty times were Sandorf and his friend seized in one of these liquid suckers and irresistibly drawn to its centre in the manner of the Maelstrom. Then they would be spun round by the gyratory movement, and then thrown off from the edge like a stone from a sling as the eddy broke.

Half an hour went by under such circumstances with death imminent each minute and each second. Sandorf, endowed with superhuman energy, had not yet yielded in despair. He rejoiced that his companion was almost senseless. Had he retained the instinct of self-preservation he would struggle, and then Sandorf would be obliged to leave him to his fate, or both would be overwhelmed.

Nevertheless the state of affairs could not continue very long. Sandorf's strength began to fail him. Every now and then as he supported Bathory's head, his own would sink back into the liquid pillow. Suddenly respiration became difficult. He gasped for breath, he was choking, *he was wrestling with asphyxia*. Often he had to leave go *of his companion*, whose head sank instantly ; but invariably *he managed to grip him again*, and that amid the wild

racing of the waters which, shouldered back and piled on each other by the occasional narrowing of the channel, thundered along in foam.

At last Count Sandorf thought that all was lost. Bathory slipped from his grasp. He tried to rescue him. He could not. He had lost him ; and he himself was dragged down to the torrent's bed.

A violent shock nearly broke his shoulder. He stretched out his hand instinctively. His fingers closed on a clump of roots which were swimming by.

The roots were those of a tree-trunk being brought down by the torrent. Sandorf fastened on to this raft and dragged himself back to the surface of the Foiba. Then while he grasped the roots with one hand he sought for his companion with the other.

A moment afterwards (Bathory was seized by the arm) and after a violent effort hoisted on to the trunk, where Sandorf took his place beside him. Both were for a time saved from the danger of drowning, but they had bound up their destiny with that of their raft, and given themselves over to the caprices of the rapids of the Buco.

Sandorf had not lost his consciousness for a moment. He made it his first care to make sure that Bathory could not slip from the tree. By excess of precaution he placed himself behind him, so as to hold him in his arms. In this position he kept watch for the end. At the first glimpse of light that penetrated the cavern he would see what the waters were like as they emerged. But there was nothing as yet to show that they were near the end of this wonderful stream.

However, the position of the fugitives had improved. The tree was about twelve feet long, and the spreading roots were now and then struck against the projections. If it were not subjected to a very violent shock its stability in spite of the irregularities of the stream seemed to be assured. Its speed could not be less than nine miles an hour, being equal to that of the torrent that bore it.

Sandorf had recovered all his coolness. He tried to revive his companion, whose head rested on his knees. He found that his heart still beat, but that his breathing was difficult. He bent over and tried to breathe a little air into his lungs. Would that the preliminaries of asphyxia had not injured him without hope of relief !

Soon Bathory made a slight-movement. More-marker

expirations came from his parting lips. At last a few words escaped from his mouth.

"Wife! My boy! Mathias!"

His whole life was in those three words.

"Stephen, do you know me? do you know me?" asked Sandorf, who had to shout to make himself heard above the wild tumult with which the torrent filled the vaults of the Buco.

"Yes! Yes! I know you! Speak! Speak! Your hand in mine!"

"We are no longer in immediate danger," answered Sandorf. "A raft is carrying us. Where, I cannot say; but it will not leave us!"

"Mathias! and the donjon?"

"We are far away from it now! They will think we found our death in the torrent, and assuredly they will never dream of pursuing us. Wherever this torrent flows out, into sea or river, we shall go; and we shall get there alive! Keep your courage up, Stephen! I will look after you! Be quiet for a little and recover the strength you will soon want! In a few hours we shall be saved! We shall be free!"

"And Ladislas?" murmured Bathory.

Sandorf gave no answer. What could he say? Zathmar, after giving the alarm from the window, must have been seized, so that flight was impossible, and now under strict guard could in no way be helped by his friends.

Stephen's head again fell back. He had not the physical energy to master his torpor. But Sandorf watched over him, ready for anything, even to abandon the raft if it happened to crash up against the rocks which in the midst of the profound darkness it was impossible to avoid.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning before the speed of the current, and consequently that of the tree, began sensibly to slacken. Evidently the channel was getting wider, and the waters finding a freer passage between the walls were travelling at a more moderate pace. And it was not unreasonable to expect that the end of the subterranean pass was close at hand.

But if the walls were widening, the roof was closing down on them. By raising his hand Count Sandorf could *skim the surface* of the irregular schists which stretched *above his head*. Frequently there came a grating noise as *the roots of the tree ground* against the roof. Then the





Bathory was seized by the arm. Page 213

trunk would stagger as it recoiled from some violent collision and swing off in a new direction. And then it would drift across the stream, and twist and writhe till the fugitives feared they would be wrenched away. That danger over—after it had been experienced several times—there remained another of which Sandorf coolly calculated the consequences. What was to happen if the roof continued to close down? Already his only way of escape was to fall backwards the instant his hand felt a projecting rock. Would he have to take to the stream? As far as he was concerned, he might attempt it; but how could his companion keep afloat? And if the channel kept low for a long distance how were they to come out of it alive? How indeed—and was death to be the end after so many escapes from death?

Sandorf, energetic as he was, felt his heart wrung with anguish. He saw that the supreme moment was approaching. The tree-roots ground against the overhanging rocks more violently; and at times the top of the trunk was driven so deeply into the current that the water entirely covered it.

“But,” said Sandorf, “the outlet cannot be far off.”

And then he looked to see if some vague streak of light did not filter into the darkness ahead. By this time was the night advanced enough for the darkness outside to have lifted? Was the lightning still flashing beyond the Buco? If so a little light perhaps would show itself in this channel which threatened to get too small to hold the Foiba. But there was nothing. Nothing but absolute darkness and roaring waters of which even the foam remained black!

Suddenly there was a terrific shock. By its forward end the tree had dashed against an enormous pendant from the roof. As it struck it completely turned over. But Sandorf did not let go of it. With one hand he desperately clung to the roots, with the other he held his companion. And the tree sank, and with it the men sank into the mass of waters which then filled the channel to the roof.

This lasted for nearly a minute. Sandorf felt that he was lost. Instinctively he stopped breathing, so as to economize the little air that remained in his lungs.

Suddenly through the liquid mass, although his eyes were closed, he felt the impression of a vivid light. A lightning flash, it was, followed by the noise of thunder.

It was the light, at last!

The Foiba had emerged from the subterranean channel and was flowing in the open. But whither was it flowing? On what sea-coast was its mouth? That was still the insoluble question—a question of life or death.

The trunk of the tree had floated to the surface again. Bathory by a strong effort was dragged up and took his place at the end. Then Sandorf looked before him, around him, above him.

Up stream a dark mass was being left behind. This was the huge cliff of the Buco in which the underground channel opened which gave passage to the waters of the Foiba. Day was already showing itself, by the scattered streaks of light overhead, vague as the nebulae which the eye can only just see on a winter's night. From time to time a few pale lightning flashes lighted up the background amid the dull roll of occasional thunder. The storm was slowly going or else dying away.

To the right, to the left, Sandorf threw a glance of keen anxiety. He saw that the river flowed between two high cliffs, and that its speed was terrific.

They were in a rapid which was taking them along amid all its races and eddies. But above their head now was the infinite, and no longer the narrowing vault with its ledges threatening each instant to crush them. But there was no bank on which they could set foot, no slope on which they could disembark. Two steep high walls shut in the narrow Foiba, and it was really the old channel with its vertical walls, but without its roof of stone.

The last immersion had greatly revived Bathory. His hand had sought Sandorf's, who clasped it as he whispered,—

“Saved!”

But had he a right to use the word “saved,” when he did not even know where the river ended or what country it traversed, or when they would be able to abandon their raft? Such, however, was his energy that he sat upright on the tree and three times shouted the word aloud,—

“Saved! Saved! Saved!”

Who could hear him? No one on these rocky cliffs whose boulders and schists had not mould enough to bear even a bramble. The country hidden by the high banks *would be sought by no human being—a desolate country through which the Foiba runs imprisoned like an artificial*

canal between its rocky walls. Not a brook flows in to feed it. Not a bird skims its surface, not even a fish ventures into its too rapid waters. Here and there huge rocks rise in its bed and their parched summits show that the watercourse with all its violence is nothing but a sudden overflowing due to heavy rain. At ordinary times the bed of the Foiba is simply a deep ravine.

The only danger now was lest the tree should be hurled on to the rocks. It avoided them of itself as it kept in the middle of the currents which swept round them. But it was impossible to check its speed to get to shore in case a suitable landing-place was noticed.

An hour passed and no immediate danger appeared. The final flashes had died out in the distance, and the storm only manifested itself by the heavy thundering which reverberated among the lofty clouds whose long narrow bands streaked the horizon. Day was breaking and the grey was rising over the sky that had been cleared by the tumult of the night. It was about four o'clock in the morning.

Stephen lay in Sandorf's arms.

A distant report was heard towards the south-west.

"What is that?" asked Sandorf, who was still on the look-out. "Is that a gun announcing that a harbour is open? If so we cannot be far from the sea. What port can it be? Trieste? No, for there is the east, where the sun is rising! Can it be Pola, at the extreme south of Istria? But then—"

A second report was now heard, and this was almost immediately followed by a third.

"Three cannon shots," said Sandorf. "That is the signal for an embargo placed upon ships that are outward bound. Has that anything to do with our escape?"

He might fear so. Assuredly the authorities would neglect nothing to keep the fugitives from getting away from the coast.

"Heaven help us!" murmured Sandorf.

And now the lofty cliffs which shut in the Foiba began to shorten. Nothing could be seen of the country. Sudden bends marked the horizon and bounded the view a few hundred feet away. To take the bearings was impossible.

The much-widened river-bed, silent and deserted, allowed the current to flow more slowly. A few trees brought

down by the stream were floating near them. The June morning was quite chill. In their wet clothes, the fugitives shook till their teeth chattered.

Towards five o'clock the cliffs had given place to long, low banks, and the country on each side was flat and naked. The Foiba had widened to about half a mile, and become a stretch of stagnant water which might be called a lagoon, if not a lake. In the distance towards the west, there were a few vessels. Some at anchor, some with their canvas set waiting for the breeze ; and these seemed to show that the lagoon was a haven cut well back into the coast. The sea then was not far off, and there would be no difficulty in finding it. But it would not be prudent to seek shelter with the fishermen. To trust themselves in their power, supposing they had heard of the escape, would be to chance being handed over to the Austrian gendarmes, who were probably now scouring the country.

Sandorf knew not what to do, when the tree struck against a stump on the left side of the lagoon and stopped dead. The roots got entangled with a clump of brushwood and the tree swung round parallel with the bank as if it had been a boat under the control of a steersman.

Sandorf got ashore, and looked around. He wished to make sure that no one saw him.

As far as he could see there was no one, fisherman or otherwise, within sight on the lagoon.

And yet within a hundred yards of him there was a man stretched at full length on the sand who could see both him and his companion.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RUINED FARM.

SANDORF, thinking all was safe, went back to the tree, lifted his companion in his arms and laid him on the bank. He knew nothing of where he was or where he was to go.

In reality this sheet of water, which serves as the mouth of the Foiba, is neither a lagoon nor a lake, but an estuary. *It bears the name of the Leme Canal, and it communicates with the Adriatic by a narrow creek between Orscra and*

Rovigno, on the western side of the Istrian peninsula. But it was not known before this voyage that its waters came from the Foiba, and were brought through the gorge of the Buco during heavy rains.

A few paces from the bank there was a deserted hut, and Sandorf and Bathory after a short rest took shelter in it. There they stripped, and waited while the sun dried their clothes. The fishing-vessels were leaving the Leme Canal, and as far as they could see the place was deserted.

The man who had been watching them since they landed now got up, and carefully noted the position of the hut. And then he disappeared round a knoll and made off towards the south.

Three hours afterwards Sandorf and his companion resumed their clothes. They were still damp, but it was necessary to move on.

"We must not stay too long in this hut," said Bathory.

"Do you feel yourself strong enough to start?" asked Sandorf.

"I am almost exhausted with hunger!"

"Let us try to reach the coast! There we may perhaps procure something to eat and something to take us to sea. Come, Stephen!"

And they left the hut, evidently suffering more from hunger than fatigue.

Sandorf's intention was to follow the southern bank of the Leme Canal until he reached the sea. The country was deserted, it is true, but quite a number of streams intersected it on their way to the estuary. This watery network along the banks is nothing more nor less than a vast sponge, and the mud is impassable, so that the fugitives had to strike southwards obliquely, easily keeping their course by the sun, which had now risen. For two hours they kept on without meeting a human being, and without finding anything to satisfy the hunger that was devouring them.

Then the country became less arid. They found a road running east and west, which boasted a milestone that gave no indication as to the region across which they were feeling their way like the blind. There were however some hedges of mulberry-trees, and farther on a field of sorghum, which enabled them to allay their hunger, or rather to cheat the wants of their stomachs. The sorghum chewed and even eaten, and the refreshing mulberries, might per-

haps be enough to keep them from fainting from exhaustion before they reached the coast.

But if the country was inhabited, if a few fields showed that the hand of man was employed about them, the fugitives had to be careful how they met the inhabitants.

About noon five or six foot-passengers appeared on the road. As a matter of caution Sandorf thought he and Bathory had better get out of sight. Fortunately an enclosure round an old ruined farm lay some fifty yards to the left. There, before they had been noticed, he and his companion took refuge in a kind of dark cellar, where in the event of any one stopping at the farm they ran little risk of discovery if they waited till the night.

The foot-passengers were peasants and salt-marsh workers. Some were driving a flock of geese, doubtless to market at some town or village which could not be very far from the canal. Men and women were clothed in Istrian style, with the jewels, medals, earrings, breast crosses, and filigree pendants which ornament the ordinary costume of both sexes. The salt-marsh workers were more simply dressed, as with sack on back and stick in hand they marched along to the salterns in the neighbourhood, or perhaps even to the important establishments at Stagnone or Pirano in the west of the province.

Some of them stopped when they reached the farm, and rested for a little on the doorstep. They talked in a loud voice, not without a certain animation, but only of things concerning their trade.

The fugitives leant against the corner and listened. Perhaps these people had already heard of the escape and were talking about it. Perhaps they were saying something which might reveal in what part of Istria they then were.

Not a word passed on the subject. They could only continue to guess.

"If the country-people say nothing about our escape, it is a fair inference," said Sandorf, "that they have not yet heard of it."

"That," said Bathory, "would go to prove that we are some distance from the fortress. Considering the rapidity of the torrent which kept us underground for more than six hours, I am not surprised at that."

"That must be it," said Sandorf.

A couple of hours passed, and then some salt-workers, as

they passed the farm without stopping, were heard talking about the gendarmes they had met at the gate of the town.

What town? They gave it no name.

This was not very reassuring. If gendarmes were about, it was probable that they were scouring the country in search of the fugitives.

"But," said Bathory, "considering how we escaped, they might well believe us dead, and never think of pursuit."

"They will believe we are dead when they find our bodies," answered Sandorf.

There being no doubt that the police were afoot, and in search of them, they decided to stay till night. Although they were tortured with hunger, they dared not leave their retreat; and they were wise.

About five o'clock the tramp of a small troop of horse was heard along the road.

Sandorf, who had been out to the gate of the enclosure, hurriedly rejoined his companion and dragged him into the darkest corner of the cellar. There they hid themselves under a heap of brushwood, and remained motionless.

Half a dozen gendarmes headed by a sergeant were coming along the road towards the east. Would they stop at the farm? Sandorf anxiously asked. If they searched the place they could not fail to find them.

They halted. The sergeant and two of the men dismounted, while the others remained in the saddle, and received orders to search the country along the canal and then to return to the farm, where the rest would meet them at seven o'clock.

The four gendarmes moved off immediately. The sergeant and the two others picketed their horses, and sat down to talk. From the corner of the cellar the fugitives could hear all that passed.

"Yes, we shall go back to the town this evening and get the orders for to-night," said the sergeant in reply to one of the men. "The telegraph may bring us fresh instructions from Trieste."

The town in question was not Trieste; that was one point of which Count Sandorf made a note.

"Are you not afraid," said the second gendarme, "that while we are looking about here the fugitives may have got down the Quarnero Canal?"

"Yes, that is possible," answered the first gendarme, "for they might think it safer than here."

"If they do," said the sergeant, "they none the less risk being found, for the whole coast is being looked after from one end to the other."

Second fact worth noting: Sandorf and his companion were on the west coast of Istria, that is to say, near the Adriatic shore, and not on the banks of the opposite canal which runs out at Fiume.

"I think they are having a look round the salt-works at Pirano and Capo d'Istria," said the sergeant. "They might hide there easily and get on board a vessel crossing the Adriatic and bound for Rimini or Venice."

"They had much better have waited patiently in their cell," said one of the gendarmes philosophically.

"Yes," added the other, "sooner or later they'll be caught, if they have not fished them up out of the Buco! That would finish it, though, and we should not have to trot about the country in all this heat."

"And who says it hasn't finished it?" replied the sergeant. "Perhaps the Foiba has been the executioner, and when it is in flood the wretched men could not have chosen a worse road out of the donjon of Pisino."

The Foiba then was the name of the river which had carried off Count Sandorf and his companion! It was the fortress of Pisino to which they had been taken after their arrest, and there they had been imprisoned, tried, and sentenced! It was from its donjon that they had escaped! Count Sandorf knew this town of Pisino well! He had at last fixed on this point which was so important for him to know; and it would no longer be by chance that he would cross the Istrian peninsula, if flight was still possible.

The conversation of the gendarmes did not stop here; but in these few words the fugitives had learnt all they wished to know—except, perhaps, the name of the town by the canal on the Adriatic coast.

Soon the sergeant got up, and walked about the enclosure, watching if his men were returning to the farm. Twice or thrice he entered the ruined house, and looked into the rooms, rather from professional habit than suspicion. He even came to the door of the cellar, and the fugitives would certainly have been discovered if the darkness had not been so great. He even entered it, and tossed about the brushwood in the corner with his scabbard, but without *reaching those beneath*. At this moment Sandorf and *Bathory passed through almost the whole gamut of anguish*

They had resolved to sell their lives dearly if the sergeant reached them. To throw themselves on him, profit by his surprise to deprive him of his arms, to attack him two to one, to kill him or make him kill himself, they had fully made up their minds.

At this moment the sergeant was called out, and he left the cellar without noticing anything suspicious. The four gendarmes sent off to search had just returned to the farm. Despite all they could do they had not come across any traces of the fugitives in the district between the coast and the canal. But they had not come back alone—a man accompanied them.

He was a Spaniard employed in the salt-works in the neighbourhood. He was returning to the town when the gendarmes met him. As he told them that he had been all over the country between the town and the salt-works, they resolved to bring him to the sergeant. The man had no objection to go with them.

The sergeant asked him if he had noticed any strangers in the salt-works.

"No, sergeant," said the man; "but this morning, about an hour after I left the town, I saw two men who had just landed at the point along the canal."

"Two men, do you say?" asked the sergeant.

"Yes, but as in these parts we thought the execution at Pisino took place this morning, and had heard nothing about the escape, I did not pay much attention to the men. Now I know what has occurred I should not be surprised if they were the two you want."

"What is your name?" asked the sergeant.

"Carpena, and I am employed at the salt-works."

From the corner of the cellar Sandorf and Bathory could hear almost every word of this conversation which affected them so nearly. They however failed to catch the man's name.

"Could you recognize these two men you saw this morning?"

"Yes, probably!"

"Well, you can come and make a declaration, and put yourself at the disposal of the police."

"I am at your orders."

"Do you know there is a five-thousand-florins reward for the discovery of the fugitives?"

"Five thousand florins!"

PART I.

"And the hulks for him who harbours them!"

"You don't say so!"

"Go," said the sergeant.

The Spaniard's news had the effect of sending off the gendarmes. The sergeant ordered his men to mount, and as night had fallen he started for the town, after having thoroughly searched the banks of the canal. Carpena at the same time set out, congratulating himself that the capture of the fugitives would be worth so much to him.

Sandorf and Bathory remained in hiding for some time before they left the cellar which had served them for a refuge. Their thoughts ran as follows:—As the gendarmerie were on their traces, as they had been seen and were likely to be recognized, the Istrian provinces were no longer safe for them, and they must leave the country as soon as possible, either for Italy on the other side of the Adriatic, or across Dalmatia and the military frontier.

The first plan offered the best chances of success, providing they could possess themselves of a vessel, or prevail on some fisherman to land them on the Italian coast. And this plan they adopted.

Hence about half-past eight o'clock, as soon as the night was dark enough, Sandorf and his companion, after leaving the ruined farm, started off towards the south-west so as to reach the Adriatic coast. And at first they were obliged to keep to the road to avoid being lost in the marshes of the Leme.

But did not this unknown road lead to the town which it put into communication with the heart of Istria? Were they not running into great danger? Undoubtedly, but what else could they do?

About half-past nine the vague outline of a town appeared about a quarter of a mile ahead in the darkness; and it was not easy to recognize it.

It was a collection of houses clumsily built in terraces on an enormous mass of rock which towered over the sea above the harbour cut back into the re-entering angle on one of its sides. The whole was surmounted by a high campanile, whose proportions were much exaggerated in the gloom.

Sandorf had quite decided not to enter the town, where the presence of two visitors would soon be known. He tried therefore to pass round the walls so as to reach one of the points on the coast if possible.

But this they did not do without being followed for some distance by the same man who had already seen them on the Leme Canal—the same Carpena whose information they had heard given to the sergeant of gendarmerie. In fact as he went home and thought over the reward that had been offered, the Spaniard left the road so as to watch it better, and chance, luckily for him, but unluckily for them, again put him on the track of the fugitives.

Almost at the same moment a squadron of police came out from one of the gates of the town and threatened to bar the way. They had only just time to scramble out of sight, and then to hurry at full speed towards the shore by the side of one of the walls.

Here they found a fisherman's hut, with its little windows lighted up and its door open. If they could not find a refuge here, if the fisherman refused to receive them, they were lost.

To seek refuge was to risk everything, but the time had gone by for hesitation. Sandorf and his companion ran towards the door of the hut, and stopped on the threshold. Inside was a man mending his nets by the light of a ship's lantern.

"My friend," asked Count Sandorf, "can you tell me the name of this town?"

"Rovigno."

"And to whom are we speaking?"

"Andrea Ferrato, the fisherman."

"Will Andrea Ferrato consent to give us a night's lodging?"

Andrea Ferrato looked at them, advanced towards the door, caught sight of the squadron of police at the end of the wall, divining doubtless who they were that asked his hospitality and understood that they were lost if he hesitated to reply.

"Come in," he said.

But the two fugitives did not move.

"My friend," said Sandorf, "there are five thousand florins reward for whoever will give up the prisoners escaped from the donjon of Pisino!"

"I know it."

"There are the hulks," added Sandorf, "harboured there."

"I know it."

"You could not deliver—"

"I told you to come in ; come in, then !" answered the fisherman.

And Andrea Ferrato shut the door as the squadron of police came tramping past the hut.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FISHERMAN'S HUT.

ANDREA FERRATO was a Corsican, a native of Santa Manza, a little port in the arrondissement of Sartene, situated at the back of the southern point of the island. This port and Bastia and Porto Vecchio are the only ones that open on to that monotonous eastern coast of which the sea has gradually destroyed the capes, filled up the gulfs, effaced the bays, and devoured the creeks.

It was at Santa Manza, on that narrow portion of the sea between Corsica and the Italian mainland, and often among the rocks of the straits of Bonifacio that Andrea Ferrato followed his trade as a fisherman. Twenty years before he had married a young girl of Sartene. Two years afterwards they had had a daughter who was christened Maria. The fisherman's calling is a rough one, particularly when to the fishing for fish there is added the fishing for coral, which has to be sought for at the bottom of the most dangerous channels in the strait. But Andrea Ferrato was bold, robust, indefatigable, as clever with the net as with the trawl. His business prospered. His wife, active and intelligent, ruled the little house at Santa Manza to perfection. Both of them knew how to read, write, and calculate, and were fairly educated, if we compare them with the hundred and fifty thousand who cannot write their names which statistics now reveal to exist out of the two hundred and sixty thousand inhabitants of the island.

Besides—perhaps on account of this education—Andrea Ferrato was very French in his ideas and feelings, although he was of Italian origin, like the majority of the Corsicans. And at that time this had occasioned some animosity against him.

The canton, in fact, situated at the southern extremity

of the island, far from Bastia, far from Ajaccio, far from the chief centres of administration, is at heart very much opposed to everything that is not Italian or Sardinian—a regrettable state of things that we hope to see the end of as the rising generation becomes better educated.

Hence, as we have said, there was more or less latent animosity against the Ferratos. In Corsica animosity and hatred are not very far apart. Certain things occurred which embittered this animosity. One day Andrea, driven out of all patience, in a moment of anger killed a well-known vagabond who was threatening him; and he had to seek safety in flight.

But Andrea Ferrato was not at all the man to take refuge in the *maquis*, to live a life of daily strife as much against the police as against the companions and friends of the deceased, to perpetrate a series of revenges which would end by reaching his own people. Resolving to expatriate himself, he managed to leave Corsica secretly, and reached the Sardinian coast. When his wife had realized their property, given up the house at Santa Manza, sold the furniture, the boat, and the nets, she crossed over and joined him. They had left their native land for ever.

But the murder, although it was justifiably committed in self-defence, weighed on Andrea's conscience. With the somewhat superstitious ideas due to his origin, he greatly desired to ransom it. He had heard that a man's death is never pardoned till the day when the murderer saves another life at the risk of his own. He made up his mind to save a life as soon as an occasion presented itself.

Andrea did not remain long in Sardinia, where he would easily have been recognized and discovered. Energetic and brave, although he did not fear for himself he feared for those who belonged to him, he feared that the reprisals of family on family might reach them. He merely waited till he could go without exciting suspicion, and then sailed for Italy, where, at Ancona, an opportunity offered for him to cross the Adriatic to the Istrian coast, of which he availed himself.

And that is the story of why the Corsican had settled at Rovigno. For seventeen years he had followed his trade as a fisherman—and had become as well off as he had been. Nine years afterwards a son was born to him, who was named Luigi. His birth cost his mother her life.

Andrea Ferrato now lived entirely for his daughter and

his son. Maria, then aged eighteen, acted as mother to the little boy of eight. And except the deep and constant grief for the loss of his wife the fisherman of Rovigno was as happy as he could be in his work and the consciousness of having done his duty. He was respected throughout the district. He was ever ready to help, and his advice was always valuable. He was known to be clever at his trade. Among the long ridges of rocks which guard the Istrian shore he had no reason to regret the Gulf of Santa Manza or the Straits of Bonifacio. He had become an excellent pilot in those parts where the same language is spoken as in Corsica. From his pilotage of the ships between Pola and Trieste he earnt almost as much as from his fishing. And in his house the poor were not forgotten, and Maria did her best in works of charity.

But the fisherman of Santa Manza had never forgotten his vow, a life for a life! He had taken one man's life. He would save another's.

That was why, when the two fugitives presented themselves at his door, guessing who they were, knowing the penalty to which he was exposing himself, he had not hesitated to say to them, "Come in," and adding in his thoughts, "And may Heaven protect us all!"

The squadron of police passed the door and did not stop. Sandorf and Bathory could thus fancy they were safe—at least for that night.

The hut was built not in the town itself, but about five hundred yards from its walls, below the harbour and on a ridge of rocks which commanded the beach. Beyond, at less than a cable's length was the sea, breaking on the sands and stretching away to the distant horizon. Towards the south-west there jutted out the promontory whose curve shuts in the small roadstead of Rovigno.

It had but four rooms, two at the front and two at the back, but there was a lean-to of boards in which the fishing and other tackle was kept. Such was the dwelling of Andrea Ferrato. His boat was a balancello with a square stern about thirty feet long, rigged with a mainsail and foresail—a description of boat well adapted for trawling. When she was not in use she was moored inside the rocks, and a little boat drawn up on the beach was used in journeying to and from her. Behind the house was an enclosure of about half an acre, in which a few vegetables grew among the mulberry and olive trees and the vines. A

hedge separated it from a brook about six feet broad ; and beyond was the open country.

Such was this humble but hospitable dwelling to which Providence had led the fugitives ; such was the host who risked his liberty to give them shelter.

As soon as the door closed on them, Sandorf and Bathory examined the room into which the fisherman had welcomed them.

It was the principal room of the house, furnished in a way that showed the taste and assiduity of a careful housekeeper.

"First of all you want something to eat ?" said Andrea.

"Yes, we are dying with hunger !" answered Sandorf.

"For twelve hours we have had no food."

"You understand, Maria ?"

And in a minute Maria had put on the table some salt pork, some boiled fish, a flask of the local wine of the dry grape, with two glasses, two plates, and a white tablecloth. A "veglione," a sort of lamp with three wicks fed with oil, gave light in the room.

Sandorf and Bathory sat down to the table : they were quite exhausted.

"But you ?" said they to the fisherman.

"We have had our meal !" answered Andrea.

The two famished men devoured—that is the proper word—the provisions which were offered with such simplicity and heartiness.

But as they ate they kept their eyes on the fisherman, his daughter and his son, who sat in a corner of the room and looked at them back without saying a word. Andrea was then about forty-two, a man of severe and even sad expression, with a sunburnt face, black eyes, and a keen look. He wore the dress of the fishermen of the Adriatic, and was of active, powerful build.

Maria—whose face and figure recalled her mother—was tall, graceful, pretty rather than handsome, with bright black eyes, brown hair, and a complexion lightly tinted by the vivacity of her Corsican blood. Serious by reason of the duties she had fulfilled from her childhood, having in her attitude and movements the serenity a reflective nature gives, everything about her showed an energy that would never fail, no matter in what circumstances she might be placed. Many times she had been sought in marriage by the young fishermen of the country, but in

vain. Did not all her life belong to her father and the child who was so dear to him ?

That boy Luigi was already an experienced sailor—hard-working, brave and resolute. Bareheaded in wind and rain he accompanied Andrea in his fishing and piloting. Later on he promised to be a vigorous man, well trained and well built, more than bold, even audacious, ready for anything and careless of danger. He loved his father. He adored his sister.

Count Sandorf had been keenly examining these three, united in such touching affection. That he was among people he could trust he felt sure. When the meal was finished, Andrea rose and approaching Sandorf said,—

“Go and sleep, gentlemen. No one knows you are here. To-morrow we can talk.”

“No, Andrea Ferrato, no !” said Sandorf. “Our hunger is now appeased ! We have recovered our strength ! Let us leave the house this instant, where our presence is so dangerous to you and yours.”

“Yes, let us leave,” added Bathory. “And may Heaven reward you for what you have done !”

“Go and sleep ; it is necessary,” said the fisherman. “The beach is watched to-night. An embargo has been put upon all the ports on the coast. You can do nothing now.”

“Be it so, if you wish it,” answered Sandorf.

“I wish it.”

“One word only. When was our escape known ?”

“This morning,” answered Andrea. “But there were four prisoners in the donjon of Pisino. You are only two. The third, they say, was set free.”

“Sarcany !” exclaimed Sandorf, immediately checking the movement of anger that seized him as he heard the hated name.

“And the fourth ?” asked Bathory, without daring to finish the sentence.

“The fourth is still living,” answered Ferrato. “His execution has been put off.”

“Living !” exclaimed Bathory.

“Yes,” answered Sandorf ironically. “They are keeping him till they have got us, to give us the pleasure of dying together.”

“*Maria*,” said Ferrato, “take our guests to the room at the back, but do not have a light. The window must not

show from without that there is a light in the room. You can then go to bed. Luigi and I will watch."

"Yes, father," answered the boy.

"Come, sirs," said the girl.

A moment afterwards Sandorf and his companion exchanged a cordial shake of the hand with the fisherman. Then they passed into the chamber, where they found two good mattresses of maize on which they could rest after so many fatigues.

But already Andrea had left the house with Luigi. He wished to assure himself that no one was prowling round the neighbourhood, neither on the beach nor beyond the brook. The fugitives could then sleep in peace till the morning.

The night passed without adventure. The fisherman had frequently been out. He had seen nothing suspicious.

In the morning of the 18th of June, while his guests were still asleep, Andrea went out for news into the centre of the town and along the wharves. There were many groups talking over the events of the past day. The placard stuck up the evening before relating the escape, the penalties incurred and the reward promised, formed the general subject of conversation. Some were gossiping, some detailing the latest news, some repeating the rumours in vague terms which meant nothing in particular. There was nothing to show that Sandorf and his companion had been seen in the neighbourhood, nor even that there was any suspicion of their presence in the province. About ten o'clock, when the sergeant and his men entered Rovigno, after their night expedition, a rumour spread that two strangers had been seen twenty-four hours before on the Leme Canal. The district from there to the sea had been searched for them in vain. There was not a vestige of their visit. Had they then reached the coast, possessed themselves of a boat, and gone to some other part of Istria, or had they crossed the Austrian frontier? It would seem so.

"Good," said one of the men. "There are five thousand florins saved to the treasury."

"Money that might be better spent than in paying rascally-informers!"

"And they have managed to escape!"

"Escape? Yes. And they are safe on the other side of the Adriatic."

From this conversation, which took place among

group of peasants, artisans and shopkeepers, who were standing in front of one of the placards, it seemed that public opinion was rather in favour of the fugitives—at least among the people of Istria who are either Slaves or Italians by birth. The Austrian officials could hardly count on treachery.

But they were doing all they could to recover the fugitives. All the squadrons of police and companies of gendarmerie had been afoot since the evening, and an incessant exchange of despatches was taking place between Rovigno, Pisino, and Trieste.

When Andrea returned home about eleven o'clock he brought back the news, which was thus rather favourable than otherwise.

Sandorf and Bathory had had their breakfast taken them into their room by Maria, and were finishing it as he appeared. The few hours' sleep, the good food, and the careful attention had entirely recovered them from their fatigues.

"Well, my good friend?" asked Count Sandorf as soon as Andrea closed the door.

"Gentlemen, I do not think you have anything to be afraid of at present."

"But what do they say in the town?" asked Bathory.

"They are talking a good deal about two strangers who were seen yesterday morning when they landed on the bank of the Leme Canal—and that concerns you."

"It does concern us," answered Bathory. "A man a salt-worker in the neighbourhood has seen and reported us."

And Andrea Ferrato was told of what had passed at the ruined farm while they were in hiding.

"And you do not know who this informer was?" asked the fisherman.

"We did not see him," replied Sandorf, "we could only hear him."

"That is a pity," said Ferrato. "But the important thing is that they have lost trace of you, and if it is supposed that you have taken refuge in my house I do not think any one would betray you. The promise of one is binding on all in these parts."

"Yes," answered Sandorf, "and I am not surprised at it. A fine lot of fellows are the people of these provinces! But we have to do with the Austrian officials, and *they will not leave a stone unturned to retake us.*"

"There is one thing in your favour," said the fisherman, "and that is the pretty general opinion that you have already crossed the Adriatic."

"And would to Heaven they had!" added Maria, who had joined her hands as if in prayer.

"That we shall do, my dear child," said Sandorf in a tone of entire confidence; "that we shall do, with Heaven's help—"

"And mine, count," replied Andrea. "Now I am going on with my work as usual. People are accustomed to see us getting our nets ready on the beach, or cleaning up the balandello, and we must not alter that. Besides, I must go and study the weather before I decide what to do. You remain in this room. Do not leave it on any pretext. If necessary you can open the window on to the yard, but remain at the back of the room, and do not let yourselves be seen. I will come back in an hour or two."

Andrea then left the house, accompanied by Luigi, and Maria busied herself with the housework as usual.

A few fishermen were on the beach. As a matter of precaution he went and exchanged a few words with them before beginning on his nets.

"The wind is pretty steady now," said one of them.

"Yes," answered Andrea, "that last storm cleared the weather for us."

"Hum!" added another, "the breeze will freshen towards evening and turn to a storm if the bora joins in with it."

"Good! then the wind will blow off the land, and the sea will not be so lively among the rocks."

"We shall see!"

"Are you going fishing to-night, Andrea?"

"Certainly, if the weather will let me."

"But the embargo?"

"The embargo is only on big ships, not on coasting boats."

"All the better; for we have got a report that shoals of tunnies are coming up from the south, and there is no time to lose in getting out the madragues."

"Good," said Andrea. "But we shall lose nothing."

"Eh? Perhaps not!"

"No, I tell you, if I go out to-night I shall go after bonicous, out Orsera or Parenzo way."

"As you like! But we will set to work to get the madragues down at the foot of the rocks."

"All right."

Andrea and Luigi then went after their nets stowed away in the outhouse, and stretched them out on the sand so as to dry them in the sun. Then two hours later the fisherman came back, having told Luigi to get ready the hooks for the bonicous, which are a sort of fish with brownish-red flesh belonging to the same genus as the tunnies and the same species as the anxides.

CHAPTER XIV.

CARPENA'S OFFER.

TEN minutes later, after a smoke at his door, Andrea rejoined his guests in the room, while Maria continued her work about the house.

"Count," said the fisherman, "the wind is off the land, and I do not think the sea will be rough to-night. The simplest way and consequently the best way to avoid observation is for you to come with me. If you think so, it would be better to get away to-night about ten o'clock. You can then get down between the rocks to the water's edge. No one will see you. My boat will take you off to the balancello, and we can at once put to sea without attracting attention, for they know I am going out to-night. If the breeze freshens too much I will run down the coast so as to set you ashore beyond the Austrian frontier, at the mouths of the Cattaro."

"And if it does not freshen, what are you going to do?" asked Sandorf.

"We will go out to sea," answered the fisherman, "and I will land you on the coast of Rimini, or at the mouth of the Po."

"Is your boat big enough for a voyage like that?" asked Bathory.

"Yes, it is a good boat, half-decked, and my son and I have been out in her in very bad weather. Besides, we *must run some risk.*"

"*We must run some risk,*" said Count Sandorf; "our

lives are at stake, and nothing is more natural. But for you, my friend, to risk your life—”

“That is my business, count,” answered Andrea; “and I am only doing my duty in wishing to save you.”

“Your duty?”

“Yes.”

And Andrea Ferrato related that episode in his life on account of which he had left Santa Manza, and told how the good he was about to do would be a just compensation for the evil he had done.

“You are a splendid fellow!” exclaimed Sandorf, much affected by the recital.

Then continuing,—

“But if we go to the mouths of the Cattaro or the Italian coast that will necessitate a long absence, which on your part will astonish the people of Rovigno. After you have put us in safety there is no need for you to return and be arrested—”

“Never fear,” answered Andrea. “Sometimes I am five or six days at sea. Besides, I tell you that is my business. It is what must be done and it is what shall be done.”

So that the only thing to do was to discuss the scheme, which was evidently a good one and easy of execution, for the balancello was quite equal to the voyage. Care would have to be taken in getting on board; but the night was sure to be dark and moonless, and probably with the evening one of those thick mists would come up along the coast which do not extend far out to sea. The beach would then be deserted. The other fishermen, Ferrato’s neighbours, would be busy, as they had said, among their madragues on the rocks two or three miles below Rovigno. When they sighted the balancello, if they did sight her, she would be far out at sea with the fugitives under her deck.

“And what is the distance in a direct line between Rovigno and the nearest point of the Italian coast?” asked Bathory.

“About fifty miles.”

“And how long will it take you to do that?”

“With a favourable wind we ought to cross in twelve hours. But you have no money. You will want some. Take this belt, it has got three hundred florins in it, and buckle it round you.”

“My friend—” said Sandorf.

"You can return it later on," replied the fisherman, "when you are in safety. And now wait here till I come back."

Matters being thus arranged Ferrato went to resume his usual occupations, sometimes on the beach and sometimes about his house. Luigi, without being noticed, took on board in a spare sail provisions for several days. There seemed no possibility of suspicion that might alter Ferrato's plans. He was even so careful in his precautions as not to see his guests again during the day. Sandorf and Bathory remained in hiding at the back of the room in which the window remained open. The fisherman was to call them when it was time for them to go.

Many of the neighbours came in to have a chat during the afternoon about the appearance of the tunnies and the fishing. Andrea received them in the front room and offered them something to drink as usual.

The greater part of the day thus passed in going backwards and forwards and in talk. Many times the subject of the prisoners cropped up. There was a rumour that they had been caught near the Quarnero Canal on the opposite side of Istria—a rumour which was soon afterwards contradicted.

All seemed working for the best. That the coast was more closely watched than usual by the custom-house men, the police, and the gendarmes was certain; but there would probably be no difficulty in evading the guard when night came on.

The embargo, as we know, had only been put on the long-voyage ships and the Mediterranean coasters, and not on the local fishing-boats. The balancello would thus be able to get under sail without suspicion.

But Andrea Ferrato had not reckoned on a visit he received in the evening. This visit was a surprise at the first, and made him anxious, although he did not understand the meaning of the threat until after his visitor's departure.

Eight o'clock was on the point of striking, and Maria was preparing the supper and had already laid the table in the large room, when there came two knocks at the door. Andrea did not hesitate to go and open it. Much surprised he found himself in the presence of the Spaniard, Carpena.

This Carpena was a native of Almayati, a little town in the province of Malaga. As Ferrato had left Corsica, so

had Carpena left Spain, to settle in Istria. There he found employment in the salt-works and in carrying the products of the western coast into the interior—a thankless occupation that barely brought him in enough to live upon.

He was a strong fellow, still young, being not more than five and twenty—short of stature but broad of shoulder, with a large head covered with curly, coarse black hair, and one of those bulldog faces that look as forbidding on a man as on a dog. Carpena was unsociable, spiteful, vindictive, and a good deal of a scoundrel, and was anything but popular. It was not known why he had left his country. Several quarrels with his fellow-workmen, a good deal of threatening with one and the other followed by fights and scuffles, had not added to his reputation. People liked Carpena best at a distance.

He, however, had a sufficiently good opinion of himself and his person—as we shall see—and was ambitious of becoming Ferrato's son-in-law. The fisherman, it must be confessed, did not give his overtures a cordial reception. And that will be understood better when the man's pretensions have been disclosed in the conversation that followed.

Carpena had hardly set foot in the room than Andrea stopped him short with—

“What have you come here for?”

“I was passing, and as I saw a light in your window I came in.”

“And why?”

“To visit you, neighbour.”

“But your visits are not wanted you know!”

“Not usually,” answered the Spaniard; “but to-night it will be different.”

Ferrato did not understand and could not guess what such enigmatic words meant in Carpena's mouth. But he could not repress a sudden start, which did not escape his visitor, who shut the door behind him.

“I want to speak to you!” said he.

“No! You have nothing to say to me.”

“Yes—I must speak to you—in private,” added the Spaniard, lowering his voice.

“Come then,” answered the fisherman, who during this day had his reasons for not refusing any one admittance. Carpena, at a sign from Ferrato, crossed the room and entered his bed-room, which was separated only by a thin

partition from that occupied by Sandorf and his companion. One room opened on to the front, the other on to the back of the house. As soon as they were alone—

"What do you want with me?" asked the fisherman.

"Neighbour," answered Carpena, "I again come to appeal to your kindness."

"What for?"

"About your daughter."

"Not another word!"

"Listen then! You know that I love Maria, and that my dearest wish is to make her my wife."

And in fact Carpena had for several months been pursuing the girl with his attentions. As may be imagined these were due more to interest than to love. Ferrato was well off for a fisherman, and compared to the Spaniard, who possessed nothing, he was rich. Nothing could be more natural than that Carpena should wish to become his son-in-law; and on the other hand nothing could be more natural than that the fisherman invariably showed him the door.

"Carpena," answered Ferrato, "you have already spoken to my daughter and she has told you: no. You have already asked me and I have told you: no. You again come here to-day and I tell you: no, for the last time."

The Spaniard's face grew livid. His lips opened and showed his teeth. His eyes darted a ferocious look at the fisherman. But the badly lighted room prevented Ferrato from seeing that threatening physiognomy.

"That is your last word?" asked Carpena.

"That is my last word, if it is the last time you ask me. But if you renew the request you shall have the same reply."

"I shall renew it! Yes! I shall renew it," repeated Carpena—"if Maria tells me to do so."

"She do so," exclaimed Andrea. "She! You know she has neither friendship nor esteem for you!"

"Her sentiments may change when I have had an interview with her," answered Carpena.

"An interview?"

"Yes, Ferrato. I wish to speak to her."

"When?"

"Now!—You understand—I must speak to her—I must—*this very night!*"

"On her behalf I refuse!"

"Take care what you are doing," said Carpena, raising his voice. "Take care!"

"Take care?"

"I will be revenged."

"Oh! Take your revenge if you like, or if you dare!" answered Ferrato, who was getting angry in turn. "All your threats won't frighten me! And now get out, or I'll throw you out!"

The blood mounted to the Spaniard's eyes. Perhaps he thought of attacking the fisherman! But he restrained himself, and making a snatch at the door, he dashed out of the room and out of the house without saying another word.

He had scarcely gone before the door of the other room opened and Count Sandorf, who had lost none of the foregoing conversation, appeared on the threshold. Stepping up to Andrea he said to him in a low voice,—

"That is the man that gave the information to the sergeant of gendarmerie. He knows us. He saw us when we landed on the bank of the Leme Canal. He followed us to Rovigno. He evidently knows that you have sheltered us in your house. So let us be off at once, or we shall be lost—and you too!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE FINAL EFFORT OF THE FINAL STRUGGLE.

ANDREA FERRATO remained silent. He said nothing in answer to Count Sandorf. His Corsican blood boiled within him. He had forgotten the fugitives for whom up to then he had risked so much. He thought only of the Spaniard, he saw only Carpena!

"The scoundrel! The scoundrel!" he murmured, at length. "Yes! He knows all! We are at his mercy! I ought to have understood."

Sandorf and Bathory looked anxiously at the fisherman. They waited for what he was going to say, what he was going to do. There was not an instant to lose. The informer had, perhaps, already done his work.

partition from that occupied by the kitchen. One room opened on to the street, the other into the hall of the house. As soon as

"What do you want with me?"

"Neighbour," answered Carpena, "I beg of your kindness."

"What for?"

"About your daughter."

"Not another word!"

"Listen then! You know my dearest wish is to make

And in fact Carpena had been suiting the girl with his all these were due more to him than to the fisherman, and as he possessed nothing, he was as natural than that Carpena was his in-law; and on the other hand, as natural than that the fisherman was his door.

"Carpena," answered Ferrato, "I have come to my daughter and she has already asked me and I have come here to-day and I have

The Spaniard's face showed his teeth. His fisherman. But the boy was from seeing that threat.

"That is your last word."

"That is my last word. But if you renew the interview, I shall renew it." reply."

"I shall renew it if Carpena—" if Maria

"She do so," exclaimed Ferrato. "She has neither friendship nor

"Her sentiments are not in interview with her," answered

"An interview?"

"Yes, Ferrato."

"When?"

"Now!—You will see me—this very night!"

"On her behalf."

"Scoundrel!" said Ferrato.

"This is my answer to your refusal," replied the Spaniard.

The fisherman was seized and garrotted. In a moment the police had visited and searched every room in the house. The window opening on to the yard showed the road taken by the fugitives. They started in pursuit.

Sandorf and his companion had reached the hedge which ran along the stream. Sandorf leaped it at a bound and turned to help over Stephen, when the report of a gun rang out some fifty paces off.

Bathory was hit by the bullet, which only grazed his shoulder, it is true; but his arm remained paralyzed and he could not let his companion seize it to help him.

"Escape, Mathias!" he exclaimed. "Escape."

"No, Stephen, no. We will die together," replied Sandorf, after trying for the last time to lift his wounded companion in his arms.

"Escape, Mathias!" repeated Bathory. "And live to punish the traitors!"

Bathory's last words were, as it were, a command to Sandorf. To him there fell the work of the three—to him alone. The magnate of Transylvania, the conspirator of Trieste, the companion of Stephen Bathory and Ladislas Zathmar must give place to the messenger of justice.

At this moment the police had reached the end of the yard and thrown themselves on the wounded man. Sandorf would fall into their hands if he hesitated another second.

"Adieu, Stephen; adieu!" he exclaimed.

With a leap he cleared the brook which ran along by the hedge, and disappeared.

Five or six shots were fired after him; but the bullets missed, and turning aside he ran quickly towards the sea.

The police, however, were on his track. Not being able to see him in the darkness they did not try to run straight after him. They dispersed so as to cut him off not only from the interior, but from the town and from the promontory which shelters the Bay of Rovigno.

A brigade of gendarmes reinforced them, and were so manœuvred as to prevent him from taking any other route than that towards the sea. But what could he do there? Could he possess himself of a boat and put out to the open sea? He would not have time, and before he could get her clear he would be shot. From the first he saw that

his retreat to the east was cut off. The noise of the guns, the shouts of the police and the gendarmes as they approached told him that he was hedged in on the beach. His only chance of escape was to the sea and by the sea. It was doubtless to rush to certain death; but better to find it among the waves than before the firing-party in the courtyard of the fortress of Pisino.

Sandorf then ran towards the beach. In a few bounds he had reached the first small waves that licked the sand. He already felt the police behind him, and the bullets fired at random whistled past his head.

All down this Istrian coast there is a reef of isolated rocks just a little way out from the shore. Between these rocks there are pools filling the depressions in the sand—some of them several feet deep, some of them quite shallow.

It was the last road that was open, and although Sandorf thought death was at the end he did not hesitate to take it.

He raced along, clearing the pools and jumping from rock to rock; but his profile thus became more visible against the less dense darkness of the horizon. And immediately the shouts gave the alarm and the police dashed out after him.

He had resolved not to be taken alive. If the sea gave him up, it would give up a corpse.

The difficult chase over the shaking and slippery rocks, over the viscous wracks and weeds, through the pools where every step might mean a fall, lasted for more than a quarter of an hour. The fugitive was still ahead, but the solid ground was soon to fail him.

He reached the last rocks of the reef. Two or three police were not more than ten yards away, the others were about double as far behind.

Count Sandorf stopped. A last cry escaped him—a cry of farewell thrown to Heaven. Then as a discharge of bullets rained around him, he precipitated himself into the sea.

(The police came to the very edge of the rock, and saw nothing but the head of the fugitive, like a black point, turned towards the offing.) *from a piece of picture*

Another volley pattered into the water round the count. And doubtless one or two bullets reached him, for he sank under the waves and disappeared.

Till day broke the police kept watch along the reef and the beach, from the promontory to beyond the fort of

Rovigno. It was useless. Nothing showed that Sandorf had again set foot on shore. It remained undoubted then that if he had not been shot he had been drowned.

But though a careful search was made no body was ever found among the breakers nor on the sands for more than a couple of leagues along the coast. But as the wind was off shore and the current running to the south-west, there could be no doubt that the corpse of the fugitive had been swept out to the open sea.

Count Sandorf, the Magyar nobleman, had then found his grave in the waves of the Adriatic.

After a minute investigation this was the verdict, a very natural one, to which the Austrian Government came.

Stephen Bathory, captured as we have seen, was taken under escort during the night to the donjon of Pisino, there for a few hours to join Ladislas Zathmar.

The execution was fixed for the 30th of June.

Doubtless at this supreme moment Stephen would have a last interview with his wife and child; Ladislas would see his servant for the last time, for permission had been given to admit them to the donjon. But Madame Bathory and her son, and Borik, who had been let out of prison, had left Trieste. Not knowing where the prisoners had been taken, for their arrest had been a secret one, they had searched for them even in Hungary, even in Austria, and after the sentence was announced they could not reach them in time.

Bathory had not the last consolation of seeing his wife and son. He could not tell them the names of those who had betrayed him. *See Pages 138-141/143.*

Stephen Bathory and Ladislas Zathmar at five o'clock in the evening were shot in the courtyard of the fortress. They died like men who had given their lives for their country.

Toronthal and Sarcany could now believe that they were beyond all chance of reprisal. In fact the secret of their treachery was only known to themselves and to the Governor of Trieste. Their reward was half the possessions of Count Sandorf, the other half, by special favour, being reserved for his heiress when she attained her eighteenth year.

Toronthal and Sarcany, insensible to all remorse, could enjoy in peace the wealth obtained by their abominable treachery.

Another traitor seemed to have nothing to fear. This was the Spaniard Carpena to whom had been paid the reward of 5000 florins.

But if the banker and his accomplice could remain and hold their heads up at Trieste, Carpena under the weight of public reprobation had to leave Rovigno to live no one knew where. What did it matter? He had nothing to fear ; not even the vengeance of Ferrato.

For the fisherman had been arrested, found guilty, and sentenced to imprisonment for life for having sheltered the fugitives. Maria and her young brother Luigi were now left alone to live in misery in the house from which the father had been taken never to return.

And so three scoundrels for mere greed, without even a sentiment of hatred against their victims—Carpena excepted perhaps—one to restore his embarrassed affairs, the others to gain money, had carried through this odious scheme.

Was such infamy to remain unpunished in this world? Count Sandorf, Count Zathmar, Stephen Bathory, these three patriots, and Andrea Ferrato the honest fisherman, were they not to be avenged?

The future will show.

THE WRESTLERS OF RAGUSA.

CHAPTER I.

PESCADE AND MATIFOU.

FIFTEEN years after the events related in the prologue of this history, on the 24th of May, 1882, there was a holiday at Ragusa, one of the chief towns of the Dalmatian provinces.

Dalmatia is a narrow tongue of land lying between the northern Dinaric Alps, Herzegovina, and the Adriatic. It is just large enough to hold a population of from four to five hundred thousand, with a little squeezing.

A fine race are these Dalmatians: sober in an arid country, where arable land is rare, proud amid the many political vicissitudes they have undergone, haughty towards Austria which gained them by the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1815, and honest towards all; so much so that the country can be called, according to a beautiful expression reported by M. Yriarte, "The land of the lockless doors."

Dalmatia is divided into four circles, and these are subdivided into districts; the circles are those of Zara, Spalato, Cattaro, and Ragusa. The governor-general resides at Zara, the capital of the province, where the Diet meets of which many members form part of the Upper House at Vienna.

Times are much changed since the sixteenth century, when Uscoques—fugitive Turks at war with the Mussulmans as well as the Christians, with the Sultan as well as the Venetian Republic—were the terror of the sea. [↑] At the Uscoques have disappeared, and traces of them

longer to be found in Carniola. The Adriatic is now as safe as any other part of the poetical Mediterranean.

Ragusa, or rather the small state of Ragusa, was a republic even before Venice. It was only in 1808 that a decree of Napoleon united it, the year following, to the kingdom of Illyria and made of it a duchy for Marshal Marmont. In the ninth century Ragusan vessels, which ploughed every sea of the Levant, had the monopoly of the trade with the Infidels—a monopoly granted them by the Holy See—and Ragusa in consequence was of great importance among the small republics of Southern Europe. In these days Ragusa is famous for still nobler things; and the reputation of its scientists, the renown of its writers, and the taste of its artists have given it the name of the Sclavonic Athens.

The modern shipping-trade must have harbours where there is good anchorage, and water deep enough to receive vessels of large tonnage. Ragusa has no such harbour. The basin is narrow, crowded with rocks at the water-level, and hardly large enough to admit small coasters and fishing-boats.

Fortunately about a mile and a half to the north' on one of the indentations of the Bay of Ombla Fumera, a caprice of nature has formed an excellent harbour adapted for all the needs of modern-navigation. This is at Gravosa, and the harbour is perhaps the best on the Dalmatian coast. it has water enough even for war-ships; there are several repairing-slips and building-yards; and there the large mail-boats can put in with which the immediate future is to endow the waters of the world. It follows, therefore, that the road from Ragusa to Gravosa has become a regular boulevard planted with magnificent trees, bordered with charming villas, frequented by the population of the town, which in 1882 amounted to from sixteen to seventeen thousand inhabitants.

On this 24th of May, about four o'clock on a beautiful spring afternoon, the Ragusans were crowding in great numbers towards Gravosa. In that suburb—for Gravosa being built at the gates of the town may well be called such—a local fair was in progress with the usual games and sports, travelling booths, music and dancing in the open air, quacks, acrobats, and entertainers, from whose *shouts, and songs, and instruments* there arose a *tremendous uproar along the streets and jetties.*

For a stranger it afforded an excellent opportunity for studying the various types of the Slave race and the mixture of Bohemians of all kinds. In addition to the travelling showmen who had come to the fair to make money out of the curiosity of the locals, the country-folk and mountaineers had thronged in to take part in the public rejoicing. The women were in great numbers—girls from Ragusa, peasants from the neighbourhood, fisherwomen from the coast. Some were in dresses approaching the latest fashions of Western Europe; others were in dresses which varied with each district, at least in detail—white bodices embroidered on the arms and breast, cloaks of many colours, waistband with thousands of silver pins (quite a mosaic, in which the colours were as confusing as in a Persian carpet), white bonnet over hair tied up with many coloured ribbons, the "okronga" surmounted by the veil which hung down behind like the puskul of the Oriental turban, leggings and shoes fixed to the feet with plaited straw. And with all this elaborate rig-out, a heap of jewels in the form of bracelets and collars or pièces of silver arranged in a hundred ways as ornaments for the neck, the arms, the breast and the waist. Jewellery, too, was conspicuous in the dress of the men, whose clothes were edged with bright-coloured embroideries.

But among all the Ragusan costumes which even the seamen of the port wore gracefully, those of the commissionaires—a privileged corporation—were of a kind to attract special notice. These porters were regular Orientals, with turban, jacket, waistcoat, belt, large Turkish trowsers and slippers. They would not have disgraced the quays of Galata or the Tophane at Constantinople.

The fair was in full swing. The booths were doing a roaring trade. There was an additional attraction provided which was bound to bring a crowd together; this was the launch of a trabacolo, a sort of craft peculiar to the Adriatic rigged with two masts and two sails bent to a yard top and bottom by the upper and lower bolt-ropes.

The launch was to take place at six o'clock in the evening, and the hull of the trabacolo, with the shores already cleared away, was only waiting for the key to be knocked out to glide into the sea. But up to the present the mountebanks, wandering minstrels and acrobats had been in full work amusing the public by their talents and agility. The musicians drew the most spectators, and among

them the guzlers or players on the guzla were the best patronized. Accompanying themselves on their strange instruments, they sang in guttural tones the songs of their country, and they were well worth stopping to hear.

The guzla used by these virtuosos of the street has several strings stretched on a long frame, and scraped with a bow. There is no risk of the singers failing for want of notes, for they go in search of them high and low, as much in their heads as in their chests.

One of the singers—a huge fellow, yellow of skin and brown of hair, holding between his knees the guzla which looked like a 'cello grown thin—was singing with much mimicry and gesture a canzonet of which the following is almost a literal translation :—

“ When gay the song comes ringing,
 The song of the gipsy girl,
 Mark well the look she's flinging
 To help the words she's singing !
 Or beware
 Of the gipsy girl !

“ Too far away from her you stay,
 And then her love-lit eyes grow tender,
 And 'neath their veiling lashes say,
 'Come nearer, love,—and I'll surrender !'

“ When gay the song comes ringing,
 The song of the gipsy girl,
 Mark well the look she's flinging
 To help the words she's singing !
 Or take care
 Of the gipsy girl ! ”

After this the singer with his wooden bowl in his hand went round the ring and made a collection of a few coppers. But the take seemed to be rather poor, and he returned to his place to soften his auditors with the second couplet of his canzonet.

“ When full the gaze of her glorious eyes
 Meets yours and all their witchcraft lend her,
 Your heart she wins as her rightful prize,
 She'll keep it—and she'll ne'er surrender !

“ When gay the song comes ringing,
 The song of the gipsy girl,
 Mark well the look she's flinging
 To help the words she's singing !
 Or beware
 Of the gipsy girl ! ”

A man of from fifty to fifty-five was listening to the gipsy's song ; but, being little sensible to such poetical seductions, his purse had hitherto remained unopened ; and he was about to move off when the young lady by his side stopped him and said,—

"Father, I have no money with me. Will you give that man something ?"

And that is why the guzlar received four or five kreutzers which he would not have had without the girl's intervention. Not that her father, who was very rich, was mean enough to refuse alms to a poor foreigner, but simply because he was never moved at human misery.

The father and daughter passed through the crowd towards other booths just as noisy, while the guzla player disappeared, probably to liquidate his receipts.

But all the open-air artists, singers and mountebanks, were not so freely patronized. Among the most deserted were two-acrobats who were figuring away on a platform with no spectators to encourage them.

Above the stand was a sheet of canvas in a very bad state of repair, with portraits of wild animals daubed on in distemper, in which in most fantastic outline there could be seen lions, jackals, hyænas, tigers, boars, &c., leaping and disporting themselves in marvellously unreal landscapes. Behind was a tiny arena, railed off with pieces of old canvas which boasted so many holes for the eyes of the indiscreet to look through that they must have seriously diminished the receipts. In front on one of the poles was a dilapidated piece of plank as an apology for a signboard. On it these five words were roughly written in charcoal :—

PESCADE & MATIFOU,
FRENCH GYMNASTS.

From a physical point of view—and probably from a moral one also—these two men were as different one from the other as two human beings could be. They were both natives of Provence, and it was that fact alone that had brought them together to fight the battle of life in common.

Whence came their queer names ? Were they the two geographical points between which curves the Bay of Algiers ? Yes ! And the names fitted them perfectly, as that of Atlas does some giant wrestler.

Cape Matifou is an enormous mamelon, strong and unshakable, which rises at the north-east end of the vast

roadstead of Algiers as if to defy the unchained elements and illustrate the celebrated line—

“Its mass indestructible wearied out time.”

And such was the athlete Matifou—an Alcides, a Porthos, a fortunate rival of the Ompdrailles, of Nicholas Creste, and other famous wrestlers who have shone in the arenas of the south.

This giant was more than six feet in height, with a voluminous head, shoulders in proportion, chest like a smith's bellows, and limbs like tree-trunks, with the strength of steel. He was manly strength in all its magnificence, and had he known his age, we should have found, not without surprise, that he had only just entered his twenty-second year. Although this giant was not gifted with striking intelligence, yet his heart was good, and his character was simple and gentle. He knew not hate nor anger. He would do no one an injury. Seldom, indeed, would he shake the hand that was offered him for fear he should crush it in his own. In his powerful nature there was nothing of the tiger, although he had the strength. And besides at a word, at a sign even from his companion, he would obey, as if he had been the gigantic son of that little slip of a man.

As a contrast, at the western extremity of the Bay of Algiers, Point Pescade, opposite Cape Matifou, is a thin, spare, narrow rocky tongue running out into the sea. From it the name of Pescade was given to this fellow of twenty, who was small, slender, skinny, and of not half the weight of his friend, but supple, active, quick-witted, of inexhaustible good-humour through good and evil fortune, a philosopher in his way, inventive and practical—a regular monkey without the mischief—and indissolubly linked by fate to the enormous pachyderm whom he led through all the phases of a mountebank's life.

Both were acrobats by profession and travelled from fair to fair. Matifou—or Cape Matifou as he was also called—wrestled in the ring, giving all sorts of displays of strength, bending iron bars on his biceps, lifting the heaviest of his audience at arm's length, and juggling with his young companion as if he were a tennis-ball. Pescade—or Point Pescade as he was commonly called—gesticulated, sang, played the *fool*, amused the public by his clownish wit, astonished them

by his feats as an equilibrist, at which he was very clever, and mystified them with his conjuring tricks.

But why on this occasion on the quay at Gravosa are these two poor fellows left out in the cold, while the people crowd to the other booths? Why have they taken so little when they want it so much? It is difficult to say.

Their language, an agreeable mixture of Provencal and Italian, was more than enough for them to make themselves understood. Since their departure from Provence, where they had known no relatives and seemed to have been produced by spontaneous generation, they had wandered about from markets to fairs, living ill rather than well, but still living, and if not dining every day, at least having something for supper every night; and that was good enough for them, for, as Point Pescade remarked, "We need not ask for the impossible."

But if the worthy fellow did not ask for it on this occasion, he tried at it none the less in his endeavour to get together a dozen spectators before his platform in the hope that they would pay a visit to his miserable arena. But neither his witticisms, to which his foreign accent gave such point, nor his patter which would have made the fortune of a vaudevillist, nor his facial twists which would have drawn a grin from a graven image, nor his acrobatic contortions which were quite prodigies of dislocation, nor the attractions of his grass wig whose goat's-beard tail dusted the hem of his jacket, nor his sallies which were worthy of a Pulcinello of Rome or a Stentarello of Florence, had the slightest effect on the public.

And yet they had been practising on the Slaves for many months. After leaving Provence they had crossed Lombardy and Venetia, mounted, it could almost be said, one on the other. Cape Matifou famous for his strength; Point Pescade celebrated for his agility. Their renown had preceded them to Trieste in Illyria. From Trieste they had advanced through Istria, descending on the Dalmatian coast at Zara, Salone, Ragusa, finding it more profitable to advance than to retreat. Behind them they were used up, in front of them their entertainment was new and likely to bring good business. Now, alas! the tour which had never been very good threatened to become very bad, and the poor fellows had but one desire, and that they knew not how to realize; it was to get back to their native land and never come so far away from it again.

But they were dragging a weight behind them, the weight of misery, and to walk many leagues with that weight at their feet was very hard!

But without thinking of the future they had to think of the present, that is of the night's supper which had not yet been earnt. They had not a kreutzer in the treasury, if that pretentious name could be given to the corner of the handkerchief in which Point Pescade used to keep the money. In vain he sparred away on his trestles. In vain he shouted despairing appeals into vacancy. In vain Cape Matifou exhibited his biceps on which the veins stood out like the ivy on an old tree! Not a spectator showed the slightest idea of entering the canvas ring.

"Hard to move these Dalmatians!" said Point Pescade.

"As paving stones," remarked Cape Matifou.

"I don't think we shall have any luck to-day! Look here, Cape Matifou, we shall have to pack up."

"Pack up, where for?"

"You *ara* curious!"

"Tell us."

"Well, I will think of some place where we are at least sure of one meal a day."

"What place is that, Point Pescade?"

"Oh, it's far, far away—and much farther than very far, Cape Matifou."

"At the end of the world?"

"The world has no end," sententiously replied Pescade. "If it had an end it wouldn't be round! If it didn't turn it would be immovable, and if it was immovable—"

"Well?" asked Cape Matifou.

"Well, it would tumble into the sun in less time than I could juggle a rabbit."

"And then?"

"And then there will happen what happens to a clumsy juggler when two balls go smash in the air! Crack! Crash, collapse, and the people hiss and want their money back, and you have to give it to them, and to-night we shall have nothing for supper!"

"And so," asked the giant, "if the earth tumbles into the sun we shall have nothing for supper?"

And Cape Matifou fell into infinite perspectives. Seated on a corner of the platform, with his arms crossed on his *tights*, he began to nod his head like a crockery mandarin; *he said no more, he saw no more, he heard no more.* He

was absorbed in a most unintelligible association of ideas all mixed up in his mighty noddle. And this is what he felt gape like a gulf in the depths of his being. It seemed to him that he rose high, very high; higher than very high: this expression of Pescade's had struck him as being very appropriate. Then suddenly he was left alone and he fell—into his own stomach—that is to say into emptiness.

It was quite a nightmare. The poor fellow rose on the steps, with his hands extended as if he were blind. A moment later he tumbled on to the platform.

"Eh! Cape Matifou, what's up?" exclaimed Point Pescade, seizing his comrade by the hand and dragging him back.

"Mc," answered the giant in confusion. "Mc—do you mean?"

"Yes! you!"

"I have," said Matifou, collecting his ideas—a difficult operation, notwithstanding their number was so inconsiderable, "I have been thinking that it is necessary I should speak to you, Point Pescade!"

"Say on then, my Cape, and fear not that I shall not listen! Avaunt, thou public, avaunt."

The giant sat down on the steps, and in his strong arms gently, as if he were afraid of smashing him, he drew his companion to his side.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAUNCH OF THE TRABACOLO.

"AND so this does not do?" asked Cape Matifou.

"What does not do?" replied Point Pescade.

"This business!"

"It might do better, it must be admitted, but it might do worse!"

"Pescade?"

"Matifou!"

"Don't you wish to hear what I am going to say?"

"I do wish, on the contrary, if it is worth wishing for."

"Well—you ought to leave me," said the giant.

"What do you mean by leaving you? To leave you to yourself?" asked Point Pescade.

"Yes."

"Continue, Hercules of my dreams! You interest me!"

"Yes—I am sure that if you were alone you would draw the people! I prevent you. It is my fault that you don't, and without me, you would be able to—"

"Now, look here, Cape Matifou," replied Pescade seriously.

"You are big, are you not?"

"Yes."

"And tall?"

"Yes."

"Well, big and tall as you are I do not understand how you could manage to hold such a huge stupidity as you have just uttered."

"And why, Point Pescade?"

"Because it is bigger and taller than you are, Cape Matifou! Me to leave you! But if I was not here, with whom would you do the juggling?"

"With whom?"

"Who would you have to do the dangerous jump on to your occiput?"

"I do not know—"

"Or the grand flight between your hands?"

"Booh!" answered the giant, embarrassed by these pressing questions.

"Yes—in presence of a delighted audience, when by chance there is an audience!"

"An audience," murmured Matifou.

"There, shut up," continued Pescade, "and just think of earning something for supper to-night."

"I am not hungry."

"You are always hungry, Cape Matifou; and even now you are hungry," said Point Pescade, opening his companion's enormous jaws with his hands. "I see your canines as big as those of a bulldog! You are hungry, I tell you; and when we have earnt half a florin or a quarter of a florin, you shall eat."

"But you, my little Pescade?"

"Me? a grain of millet will be enough! I don't want to be strong like you, my son. This is how I look at it. *The more you eat the more you grow! The more you grow the more you become a phenomenon—*"

"A phenomenon—yes!"

"But with me, on the contrary, the less I eat, the more I waste, and the more I waste the more I become a phenomenon! Is that true?"

"That is true," answered Matifou innocently. "And so, Point Pescade, in my own interest I ought to eat!"

"Just so, my big dog, and in mine I ought not to eat!"

"But suppose there is only enough for one?"

"Then it will be yours."

"But suppose there is enough for two?"

"It would still be yours! My dear Matifou, you are worth any two men!"

"Four—six—ten!" exclaimed the giant.

And putting aside the emphatic exaggeration so common to all giants, ancient and modern, Matifou had in truth thrown every wrestler hitherto opposed to him. Two facts were told of him which showed his prodigious strength. One evening in a circus at Nîmes an upright supporting the woodwork began to give way. The cracking caused a good deal of alarm among the spectators who were threatened with being crushed by the fall of the roof or crushed by themselves as they thronged to the door. But Cape Matifou was there. He made a leap to the beam which was already out of the perpendicular, and as the framework sagged down he held it upon his shoulders as long as it was necessary to allow the audience to disperse. Then with another bound he jumped out, and the same moment the roof collapsed behind him. That was done by strength of shoulder. The following was done by strength of arm.

One day on the plains of Camargue, a bull went mad and escaped from the enclosure and chased and injured several people, and would have done a great deal of damage had it not been for Cape Matifou. The giant ran at the animal, waited for it, and as it lowered its head for the rush he seized it by the horns, and with one twist of his arm laid it on its back with its four hoofs kicking helplessly in the air.

Of his superhuman strength there had been other proofs, but these will serve to show not only Matifou's muscularity, but also his courage and devotion, for he never hesitated to risk his life when he could help his fellows. So that he was as good as he was strong. But that he should lose none of his strength it was necessary, as Pescade had said,

"Two Frenchmen!" he said to himself. "Poor fellows! They have not done much to-day!"

And then the idea occurred to him to constitute himself an audience—an audience that paid. It was only a bit of charity, perhaps, but it was a bit of charity in disguise, and it might be welcome.

So he advanced towards the door—that is towards the piece of canvas which on being raised gave admittance to the ring.

"Walk in, sir! walk in!" said Pescade. "We are just going to commence!"

"But—I am alone—" said the young man good-naturedly.

"Sir," replied Point Pescade proudly, and somewhat chaffingly, "the true artist looks at the quality and not at the quantity of his audience!"

"However—you will allow me?" said the gentleman taking out his purse.

And he picked out two florins and placed them on a tin plate in a corner of the platform.

"Bravo!" said Pescade.

Then he turned to his companion with—

"To the rescue, Matifou, to the rescue! We'll give him something for his money."

But as he was about to step in, the sole spectator of the French and Provencal arena, he stopped abruptly. He had just caught sight of the girl and her father who a quarter of an hour before had been listening to the guzlar. Both he and she had had the same thought and done a charitable action. The one had given an alms to the gipsy, the other had given an alms to the acrobat.

But, evidently, the meeting in this way was not enough for him—for as soon as he saw the lady he forgot all about the arena and the money he had paid for his place, and dashed off towards the spot where she had again mixed with the crowd.

"Hi! sir!—sir!" shouted Pescade. "Your money! We haven't earned it! What's up? Where are you going? Vanished! Sir!"

But he sought to find his "audience" in vain. It had been eclipsed. Then he looked at Matifou, who with his mouth wide open was quite as much astonished as he was.

"Just as we were going to commence!" said the giant. "*We are unlucky.*"

"Let us commence all the same!" said Pescade, running down the steps into the ring.

But at this moment there was a great shouting in the direction of the harbour. The crowd was growing excited and moving towards the seaside; and there was heard above the din the words,—

"The trabacolo! the trabacolo!"

The time had come for the launch of the little vessel. The sight, always an attractive one, was of a kind to excite the public curiosity. And the quays where the people had gathered were soon deserted for the yard in which the launch was to take place.

Point Pescade and Matifou saw that there was no chance of an audience at present, and being anxious to find the solitary stranger who had failed to fill their arena, they left it without even stopping to shut the door—and why should they shut it?—and walked off to the yard.

This yard was situated at the end of a point just beyond the harbour, where the beach sloped gradually to the sea. Pescade and his companion after a good deal of elbowing found themselves in the front row of spectators. Never, even on a benefit night, had they had such an audience!

The shores had been cleared away from the trabacolo and she was now ready for the ceremony. The anchor was ready to be let go as soon as the hull entered the water, so as to stop her running too far out into the channel. Although the trabacolo measured only about fifty tons, the mass was considerable enough for every precaution to be taken against accident. Two of the workmen of the yard were on deck aft near the flagstaff that bore the Dalmatian colours, and two others were forward standing by the anchor.

The trabacolo was to be sent into the water stern first, as is done in all other launches. Her keel resting on the soaped slide was kept in its place by a key. When the key was removed, the boat should begin to slip, and then with increasing swiftness she would rush down the ways into her natural element.

Half a dozen carpenters with sledge mallets were knocking in wedges under the keel forward, so as to increase the speed at which she would take the sea. Every one followed the operation with the greatest interest amid a general silence.

At this moment from behind the point to the south there

suddenly glided into view—a yacht. She was a schooner of about three hundred and fifty tons. She was keeping on past the point so as to open the entrance into the harbour. As the breeze was from the north-west she was close-hauled on the port tack, so as to take her straight to her anchorage. In ten minutes after she had been sighted she had come up as rapidly as if she had been looked at through a telescope with continually lengthening tube.

To enter the harbour the schooner would have to pass in front of the yard where the trabacolo was ready for launching; and as soon as she was sighted it was thought best to suspend operations for a time, and wait till she had gone by. A collision between the two vessels, one broadside on, the other coming at great speed, would have caused a catastrophe on board the yacht.

The workmen, then, stopped driving in the wedges, and the man in charge of the key was told to wait. It would only be for a minute or so. On came the schooner. She could be seen to be getting ready to anchor. Two of the jibs were taken in and the foresail brailed up. But she went on at a good speed under her fore-staysail and Spanish-reefed mainsail.

All eyes were turned on this graceful vessel whose white sails were now gilded by the oblique rays of the sun. Her sailors in Levantine uniform, with red caps, were running about at their various duties, while the captain, near the man at the helm, gave his orders in a quiet voice.

Very soon the schooner was abreast of the building-yard. Suddenly a shout arose. The trabacolo began to move. For some reason the key had given way, and she began to slide the moment the yacht was passing with starboard side towards her.

A collision seemed inevitable. There was neither the time nor the means to prevent it. Nothing could be done. To the cries of the spectators there had come in reply a shout of alarm from the schooner's crew.

The captain put down his helm; but it was impossible for his ship to get by in time to avoid the shock.

The trabacolo was slipping down the ways. A white smoke rose from the friction forward and the stern had already plunged into the waters of the bay.

Suddenly a man jumped out from the crowd. He seized a rope which hung from the fore part of the trabacolo. But in vain he tried to hold it back at the risk of being dragged

away. Close by them was an iron cannon stuck into the ground like a post. In an instant he slipped the rope over it and let it out hand over hand at the risk of being dragged round with it. He kept it back and with superhuman strength he checked it—for ten seconds.

Then the rope broke. But the ten seconds were enough. The trabacolo had plunged into the waves and recovered as from a dive. She shot across the channel, grazing by hardly a foot the schooner's stern, just as the anchor dropped into the depths and brought her sharply up by the tension of the chain.

The schooner was saved.

The hero of this daring manœuvre was no other than Cape Matifou.

"Well done! Very well done!" exclaimed Point Pescade, running up to the giant, who lifted him in his arms, not to juggle with him, but to embrace him as he always embraced—that is almost to the point of suffocation.

And then the applause resounded from all sides. Five minutes later the schooner had taken up her position in the centre of the harbour; then an elegant whale-boat with six oars brought the owner ashore.

He was a tall man about sixty, with almost white hair and grey beard cut in the Oriental fashion. Large black eyes lit up his face and a curious vivacity displayed itself in his healthily brown face. The most striking thing about him was the air of nobility that distinguished him. As soon as he set foot on shore he walked up to the two acrobats, whom the crowd was greeting and applauding.

The people stood back as he advanced. As soon as he reached Cape Matifou his first action was not to open his purse and take something from it. No! he held out his hand to the giant, and said to him in Italian,—

"Thank you, my friend, for what you did."

Cape Matifou was too bashful to notice the compliment.

"Yes! It was good! It was superb!" said Pescade, with all the redundancy of the Provençal idiom.

"You are Frenchmen?" asked the stranger.

"French of the French!" answered Pescade. "French of the south of France."

The stranger looked at them with sympathy and feeling. Before him were two mountebanks, one of whom at the risk of his life had done him a great service; for a collision

between the trabacolo and the schooner would have meant several victims.

"Come and see me on board!" he said.

"And when?" asked Pescade with a most gracious salute.

"To-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" answered Pescade, while Matifou gave sign of consent by nodding his head.

But the crowd had not ceased to surround the hero of the adventure. He would have been carried about in triumph had he not been too big. But Point Pescade, always wide awake, thought he could make some money out of the public excitement. And as soon as the stranger after a gesture of friendship had left for the jetty, he broke out with,—

"The match, sirs, the match between Pescade and Cape Matifou. Walk up, gentlemen, walk up. You don't pay till you go out—or you can pay as you come in—just as you please."

This time he was listened to and followed by a public he had never dreamt of before.

The ring was too small! They even had to refuse money!

The stranger passed on, but scarcely had he advanced a step in the direction of the quay than he found himself near the young lady and her father who had been present throughout the scene.

Close by was the young man who had followed them, and to whose salute the father only had given a very haughty acknowledgment.

In this man's presence the stranger experienced a movement he could hardly suppress. It was as if his whole body was repelled, while his eye flashed like the lightning.

The girl's father stepped up to him and said,—

"You have just escaped a great danger, sir, thanks to the courage of that acrobat."

"Quite so," replied the stranger, whose voice voluntarily or not was masked by emotion.

Then addressing his interlocutor he asked,—

"To whom may I have the honour to speak?"

"To, Silas Toronthal of Ragusa," answered the old *banker of Trieste*. "And may I ask who is the owner of the *yacht*?"

"Doctor Antekirtt!" replied the stranger.

Then they parted, while shouts of applause were heard from the distant ring of the French gymnasts.

And that evening, not only did Cape Matifou have enough to eat, that is to eat as much as four ordinary people, but enough was left for one. And that was enough for the supper of his comrade, Point Pescade.

CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR ANTEKIRTT.

THERE are people who give a good deal of employment to Fame—that woman of a hundred mouths whose trumpets blare forth their names towards the four cardinal points of the earth.

This was so in the case of the celebrated Dr. Antekirtt, who had just arrived in the harbour of Gravosa. His arrival had been signalized by an incident which would have been enough to attract public attention to the most ordinary traveller. And he was not an ordinary traveller.

For several years there had been woven round Dr. Antekirtt a sort of legend in all the legendary countries of the extreme East. Asia from the Dardanelles to the Suez Canal, Africa from Suez to Tunis, the Red Sea along the whole Arab coast, resounded with his name as that of a man of extraordinary knowledge in the physical sciences, a sort of gnostic or taleb who possessed the last secrets of the universe. In earlier times he would have been called an Epiphane; in the countries of the Euphrates he would have been venerated as a descendant of the ancient Magians.

How much of this reputation was undeserved? All that would make the Magian a magician, all that would attribute to him supernatural power. The truth is that Dr. Antekirtt was a man of high education, powerful mind, shrewd judgment, great penetration, and marvellous perspicacity, who had been remarkably served by circumstances. For example, in one of the central provinces of *Asia Minor* he had been able by a discovery of his own to

save a whole population from a terrible epidemic up to then considered to be contagious ; and in consequence his fame was unequalled.

One thing that contributed to his celebrity was the impenetrable mystery which surrounded him. Whence came he ? No one knew. What had been his history ? None could say. Where had he lived and how ? All that was certain about Dr. Antekirtt was that he was adored by the people in Asia Minor and Eastern Africa, that he was held to be a physician of wonderful skill, that the report of his extraordinary cures had even reached the great scientific centres of Europe, and that his attentions were as freely bestowed on the poorest as on the richest men and pachas of these provinces. But he had never been seen in the west, and for many years his place of residence was unknown ; and hence the propensity to regard him as some mysterious avatar, some Hindoo incarnation, some supernatural being curing by supernatural means.

But if Dr. Antekirtt had not yet practised his art in the principal states of Europe, his reputation had preceded him. Although he had only arrived at Ragusa as an ordinary traveller—a wealthy tourist yachting in the Mediterranean—the news of his arrival had soon spread through the town ; and the accident so narrowly prevented by the courage of Cape Matifou had had the effect of still further arousing the public attention.

The yacht would have done credit to the wealthiest and most fastidious of nautical sportsmen. Her two masts without rake and placed well amidships—thus giving her the full benefit of a large mainsail and fore-staysail—her long bowsprit with its two jibs, her yards on the foremast, and her powerful spars, were designed for a sail plan that would drive her at immense speed. She was, as we have said, a schooner of about three hundred and fifty tons. Of long, fine lines, neither too broad in the beam, nor too deep in the draught, but of ample stability, she was a craft that in a seaman's hands could be depended on in all weathers. In a decent breeze, either on or off the wind, she could easily reel off her thirteen knots an hour, and would have held her own in a match with any of the crack cruisers of the British clubs.

Her interior fittings were in keeping with her external appearance. The whiteness of her Canadian pine deck, *without a knot in its planking*, her companions and sky-

lights of teak with their brasswork as bright as gold, her beautifully carved helm, her spare spars under their white cases, her taut halliards and running rigging contrasting in colour with her galvanized iron shrouds and stays, her varnished boats hanging gracefully from their davits, the brilliant black of her hull relieved only by a plain gold riband combined to make her a vessel of exquisite-taste and extreme elegance.

This yacht is of considerable importance in our story. She was the floating home of that mysterious personage—its hero. Below, luxury strove with comfort. The cabins and saloons were decorated regardless of cost. The carpets and hangings and the rest of the furniture were ingeniously adapted for all the requirements of pleasure navigation; and this was shown not only in the cabins, but even in the pantry where the silver and porcelain services were kept secure from the movement of the ship, in the galley which was a picture of Dutch cleanliness, and in the crew's quarters. The men, numbering about twenty, were dressed like Maltese sailors, with short trowsers, sea-boots, striped shirts, brown waistbands, red caps, and guernseys—on which in white letters there appeared the initials of the schooner's name and that of her proprietor.

But to what port did this yacht belong? On what register had she been entered? In what Mediterranean country did she lay up for the winter? What was her nationality? No one knew, just as no one knew the nationality of the doctor! A green flag, with a red cross in the upper corner, floated at her gaff. And the flags of all nations could be sought through in vain for such an ensign. Nevertheless the officers of the port before Dr. Antekirtt came ashore had had the papers sent to them, and doubtless found them all in due order, for, after the visit of the health officer, they had given her free pratique.

But what was this schooner's name? There was written on her counter in the neatest of gold lettering the solitary word *Savarena*.

Such was the splendid pleasure craft that was now the admired of all in the harbour of Gravosa. Point Pescade and Cape Matifou, who in the morning were to be received on board by Dr. Antekirtt, regarded her with no less curiosity, and with a great deal more emotion than the sailors of the port. As natives of the coast of Provence they were well up in seafaring matters. Point Pescai

especially regarded this gem of marine architecture with all the feeling of a connoisseur. And this is what they said to each other in the evening after they had closed their show,—

“Ah!” said Cape Matifou.

“Oh!” said Point Pescade.

“Eh, Point Pescade?”

“Who said she wasn’t, Cape Matifou?”

And these words doing duty for admiring interjections were as expressive in the mouths of the two acrobats as others much longer could have been.

The *Savarena* was now anchored; her sails were stowed, her ropes were all coiled carefully down, and the awning had been pitched aft. She was moored across an angle of the harbour and thus showed that rather a long stay was in contemplation.

During the evening Dr. Antekirtt contented himself with a short walk in the neighbourhood of Gravosa. While Silas Toronthal and his daughter returned to Ragusa in their carriage, which had waited for them on the quay, and the young man we have mentioned went back down the long avenue without waiting for the end of the fair then in full swing, the doctor strolled about the harbour. It is one of the best on the coast, and at the time contained a considerable amount of shipping of different nationalities. Then after leaving the town he followed the shore of the bay of Ombla Fiumera, which extends for about thirty-six miles to the mouth of the little river Ombla, which is deep enough for vessels of moderate draught to ascend almost to the foot of the Vlastiza Mountains. About nine o’clock he returned to the jetty, where he watched the arrival of a large Lloyd mail steamer from the Indian Ocean. Then he returned on board, went down to his cabin, and remained there till the morning.

Such was his custom, and the captain of the *Savarena*—a seaman named Narsos, then in his fortieth year—had orders never to trouble the doctor during his hours of solitude.

It should be said that the officers and crew knew no more of the past history of the owner than outsiders. They were none the less devoted to him, body and soul. Although the doctor would not tolerate the least infraction of discipline, he was very kind and liberal to all. And *men were always ready to join the Savarena.* Never was

there a reprimand to give, a punishment to inflict, or a dismissal to effect. It was as though the schooner's crew were all one family.

After the doctor had come aboard all arrangements were made for the night. The lights were got up fore and aft, the watch was set, and complete silence reigned.

The doctor was seated on a large couch in an angle of his apartment. On the table were a few newspapers that his servant had bought in Gravosa. The doctor ran them over carelessly, taking no note of the leaders, but picking out the facts and reading the shipping news, and the fashionable movements. Then he threw the papers down, a sort of somnolent torpor gained upon him, and about eleven o'clock, without calling in his valet, he lay down, though it was some time before he slept.

And if we could have read the thought that especially troubled him, we might have been surprised to find that it found shape in words as, "Who was that young man who bowed to Silas Toronthal on the quay at Gravosa?"

About eight o'clock next morning the doctor appeared on deck. The day promised to be magnificent. The sun was already shining on the mountain tops which form the background of the bay. The shadows were swiftly retreating to the shore across the surface of the waters. And very soon the sun shone direct on the *Savarena*.

Captain Narsos came up to the doctor to receive his orders, which, after a pleasant greeting, were given him in very few words.

A minute afterwards a boat left the schooner with four men and a coxswain and headed for the wharf, where she was to wait the convenience of Point Pescade and Cape Matifou.

It was a grand day and a grand-ceremony in the-nomadic existence of these two honest fellows who had wandered so many-hundred miles away from that beloved Provence they so-longed to see.

They were both on the jetty. They had changed their professional costume for ordinary clothes—rather worn, perhaps, but clean; and stood there looking at the yacht and admiring her as before. And they were in particularly good spirits. Not only had they supped last night, but they had breakfasted this morning. A piece of extravagance that could only be explained by their having taken the extraordinary amount of forty-two florins. But do not let it

be thought that they had dissipated all their receipts. No! Point Pescade was prudent, and looked ahead, and life was assured them for a dozen days at the least.

"It's to you we owe that, Cape Matifou!"

"Oh! Pescade!"

"Yes, you, you big man."

"—Well, yes, to me if you like!" answered Matifou.

The *Savarena's* boat now came alongside the wharf. The coxswain rose, cap in hand, and hastened to say that he was "at the gentlemen's orders."

"Gentlemen! What gentlemen?" asked Point Pescade.

"Yourselves," answered the coxswain. "You whom Dr. Antekirtt is waiting for on board."

"Good! You see we are gentlemen already!" said Point Pescade.

Cape Matifou opened his huge eyes and twirled his hat in his hands.

"When you are ready, gentlemen!" said the coxswain.

"Oh, we are quite ready—quite ready!" said Point Pescade with a most affable bow.

And a moment afterwards the two friends were comfortably seated on the black rug with red edging which covered the thwart, while the coxswain had taken his place behind them.

Of course the enormous-weight of our-Hercules brought the boat down four or five inches below her usual load-line. And the corners of the rug had to be turned in to prevent their dragging in the water. The four oars dipped, and the boat slipped quickly along towards the *Savarena*.

It must be admitted that the two passengers were rather excited and even shy. Such honours for a pair of mountebanks! Cape Matifou dared not stir. Point Pescade, with all his confusion, could not conceal that cheerful smile which always animated his intelligent face.

The boat passed round the schooner's stern and stopped at the starboard gangway—the place of honour.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG RECRUITS.

THE ladder bent-beneath Matifou's weight as he went up the side. As soon as he and Pescade had reached the deck they were taken aft to the doctor.

After a cordial "good morning" several formalities and ceremonies had to be gone through before the visitors would consent to sit down. At last they did so.

The doctor looked at them for a moment or two without speaking. His passionless, handsome face impressed them greatly. But there could be no doubting that if the smile was not on his lips it was in his heart.

"My friends," said he, "yesterday you saved my crew and myself from a great danger. I wished to thank you once more for having done so, and that is why I asked you to come on board."

"Doctor," answered Point Pescade, who began to recover some of his assurance, "you are very kind. But what my comrade did any man would have done in his place, if he had had the strength. Wouldn't he, Cape Matifou?"

Matifou gave an affirmative sign which consisted in shaking his head up and down.

"Be it so," said the doctor, "but that is not all, for your companion has risked his life, and I consider I am under an obligation to him."

"Oh, doctor!" replied Point Pescade, "you will make my old Cape blush, and it will never do to let the blood rush to his head."

"Well, my friends," continued the doctor, "I see you do not care for compliments! So I will not insist upon them! However, as every service is worthy of—"

"Doctor!" answered Point Pescade. "I beg pardon for interrupting you, but a good action, as the copybooks say, is its own reward, and we have been rewarded."

"Alrcady! And how?" asked the doctor, who began to think that he had been anticipated.

"Undoubtedly!" replied Pescade. "After that extraordinary exhibition of strength on the part of our Hercules, the public were anxious to judge for themselves of his powers under more artistic conditions. And so they came in crowds to our Provencal arena. Cape Matifou threw

half a dozen of the stoutest mountaineers and strongest porters of Gravosa, and we took an enormous sum!"

"Enormous?"

"Yes, unprecedented in our acrobatic careers."

"And how much?"

"Forty-two florins!"

"Oh! Indeed! But I did not know that!" answered the doctor good-humouredly. "If I had known you were giving a performance I should have made it a duty and a pleasure to be present! You will allow me then to pay for my seat—"

"This evening, doctor," answered Point Pescade, "if you come to honour our efforts with your presence."

Cape Matifou bowed politely and shrugged up his huge shoulders, "which had never yet bitten the dust," to quote from the verbal programme issued by Point Pescade.

The doctor saw that he could not persuade the acrobats to receive any reward—at least of a pecuniary kind. He resolved therefore to proceed differently. Besides his plans with regard to them had been decided on the previous night; and from inquiries he had made regarding the mountebanks he had found that they were really honest men in whom all confidence could be placed.

"What are your names?" asked he.

"The only name I am known by is Point Pescade."

"And yours?"

"Matifou," answered Hercules.

"That is to say Cape Matifou," added Pescade, not without some pride in mentioning a name of such renown in the arenas of the south of France.

"But those are surnames—" observed the doctor.

"We have no others," answered Pescade; "or if we had, our pockets got out of repair and we lost them on the road."

"And—your relations?"

"Relations, doctor! Our means have never allowed us such luxuries! But if we ever get rich, we can easily find them."

"You are Frenchmen? From what part of France?"

"From Provence," said Pescade proudly; "that is to say, we are Frenchmen twice over."

"You are facetious, Point Pescade!"

"That is my trade. Just imagine a clown with a red tail, a street jester with a solemn humour. He would get more

apples in an hour than he could eat in a lifetime! Yes, I am rather lively, extremely lively, I must admit."

"And Cape Matifou?"

"Cape Matifou is more-serious, more thoughtful, more everything!" said Pescade, giving his companion a friendly pat much as if he were caressing a horse. "That is his trade also. When you are pitching half-hundreds about you have to be serious! When you wrestle you not only use your arms but your head! And Cape Matifou has always been wrestling—with-misery! And he has not yet been thrown!"

The doctor listened with interest to the brave little fellow who brought no complaint against the fate that had used him so ill. He saw that he possessed as much heart as intelligence, and wondered what he would have become had material means not failed him at the outset of life.

"And where are you going now?" he asked.

"Where chance leads us," answered Point Pescade. "And it is not always a bad guide, for it generally knows the roads, although I fancy it has taken us rather too far away from home this time! After all, that is our fault. We ought to have asked at first where it was going!"

The doctor looked at them both for a minute. Then he continued,—

"What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Pescade; "nothing—I assure you."

"Would you not like very-much to go back to Provence?"

At once a light sprang into their eyes.

"I can take you there."

"That would be capital," answered Pescade.

And then addressing his companion he said,—

"Cape Matifou, would you like to go back?"

"Yes—if you come, Point Pescade."

"But what should we do? How should we live?"

Cape Matifou knit his brows as was his way when in a fix.

"We can do—we can do—" he muttered.

"You know nothing about it—and neither do I! But anyhow it is our country! Isn't it strange, doctor, that fellows like us have a country, that although we have no parents we are born somewhere? It has always seemed queer to me."

"Can you arrange for both of you to stop with me?" asked the doctor.

At this unexpected proposition Pescade jumped up with a start, while Hercules looked on, wondering if he ought to get up too.

"Stop with you, doctor?" answered Point Pescade. "But what good shall we be to you? Exhibitions of strength and activity we are accustomed to, but we can do nothing else! And unless it is to amuse you during the voyage—"

"Listen," said the doctor. "I want a few men, brave, devoted, clever and intelligent, who can help me in my plans. There is nothing to keep you here. Will you join these men?"

"But when your plans are realized—" said Point Pescade.

"You need not leave me unless you like," said the doctor with a smile. "You can stay on board with me. And look here, you can give a few lessons in gymnastics to the crew. But if you want to go back to your country you can do so, and I'll see you do not want for the rest of your lives."

"Oh, doctor!" said Pescade. "But you do not intend to leave us nothing to do! It will not do for us to be good for nothing!"

"I will give you something to do that will suit you."

"The offer is a tempting one," said Pescade.

"What is your objection to it?"

"Only one perhaps. You see us two, Cape Matifou and me! We are of the same country, and we ought to be of the same family if we had a family! Two brothers at heart. Cape Matifou could not exist without Point Pescade, nor could Point Pescade without Cape Matifou. Imagine the Siamese twins! You must never separate us, for separation would cost us our lives. We are quite Siamese—and we like you very much, doctor!"

And Point Pescade held out his hand to Cape Matifou, who pressed it against his breast as if he had been a child.

"My friends," said the doctor, "I had no idea of separating you, and I understand that you will never leave each other."

"Then we can look upon it as arranged if—"

"If what?"

"If Cape Matifou consents."

"Say yes, Point Pescade," answered Hercules, "and you will have said yes for both."

"Good," said the doctor, "that is all right, and you will never repent it! From this day forward you need do nothing else."

"Oh, doctor! Take care!" said Pescade. "You may be engaging more than you think."

"And why?"

"We may cost you too much! Particularly Matifou! He is a tremendous eater, and you wouldn't like him to lose his strength in your service."

"I hope he will double it."

"Then he'll ruin you!"

"He won't ruin me, Point Pescade."

"But he'll want two meals—three meals a day!"

"Five, six, ten if he likes," said the doctor with a smile. "He'll find the table always laid for him."

"Eh! Old Cape!" exclaimed Point Pescade quite delightedly. "You will be able to grub away to your heart's content!"

"And so will you, Point Pescade."

"Oh! I! I am a bird! But may I ask, sir, if we are going to sea?"

"Very frequently. I have now business in all quarters of the Mediterranean. My patients are scattered all over the coast! I am going to carry on a sort of international practice of medicine! When a sick man wants me in Tangier or in the Balearics when I am at Suez, am I not to go to him? What a physician does in a large town from one quarter to another, I do from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Archipelago, from the Adriatic to the Gulf of Lyons, from the Ionian Sea to the Gulf of Cadiz! I have other vessels ten times faster than this schooner, and generally you will come with me in my visits."

"That we will, doctor," said Point Pescade, rubbing his hands.

"Are you afraid of the sea?" asked the doctor.

"Afraid of the sea!" exclaimed Point Pescade. "Children of Provence! Ragamuffins rolling about in the coast boats! No! We are not afraid of the sea, nor of the pretended sickness it yields. We are used to walk about with our heads down and our heels up, and if the ladies and gentlemen who are inclined to be sea-sick only had a couple of months of that exercise they would never want

to stick their nose in a basin! Walk up! walk up! ladies and gentlemen, and do as the others do!"

And Pescade came out with a scrap of his patter as gaily as if he were on the stand in front of his arena.

"That's good, Point Pescade!" said the doctor. "We will listen to you as long as you like, and I advise you never to lose your cheerful spirits. Laugh, my boy, laugh and sing as much as you like. The future may have such sad things in store for us that we cannot afford to despise happiness as we go."

As he spoke the doctor became serious again, and Pescade who was watching him came to the conclusion that in his past life he had experienced a greater share of grief than usual.

"Sir," said he after a pause, "from to-day we belong to you body and soul."

"And from to-day," answered the doctor, "you can take possession of your cabin. Probably I shall remain a few days at Gravosa and Ragusa; but it is as well you should get into the way of living on board the *Savarena*."

"Until you take us off to your country—" added Pescade.

"I have no country," said the doctor, "or rather I have a country, a country of my own, which can become yours if you like."

"Come on, Matifou, then. We'll go and wind up the firm! Be easy. We owe no one anything, and we are not going to offer a composition!"

And having taken leave of the doctor they embarked in the boat that was waiting for them, and were rowed to the quay.

In a couple of hours they had made out their inventory and transferred to some brother showman the trestles, painted canvas, big drum and tambourine which formed the whole assets. The transfer did not take long, and was not very difficult, and the weight of the money realized did not seriously inconvenience them.

But Point Pescade kept back his acrobat's costume and his cornet, and Matifou kept his trombone and his wrestling suit. It would have been too much for them to part with such old friends that reminded them of so many triumphs and successes; and so they were packed at the bottom of the small trunk which contained their furniture, *their wardrobe, and all their belongings.*

About one o'clock in the afternoon Point Pescade and

Matifou returned to the *Savarena*. A large cabin forward had been assigned to them—a comfortable cabin “furnished with everything you can desire,” as Pescade said.

The crew gave a cordial greeting to the new-comers who had saved them from a terrible accident, and Point Pescade and Matifou had no occasion to grieve for the food they had left behind them.

“You see, Cape Matifou,” said Pescade, “when you are led you will reach everything. But you must be led!”

Cape Matifou only replied by a nod, his mouth was full of a huge piece of grilled ham which accompanied by ten fried eggs very soon disappeared down his throat.

“It is worth all the money to see you eat!” said Pescade.

CHAPTER V.

THE WIDOW OF STEPHEN BATHORY.

THE arrival of Dr. Antekirtt had been noised about, not only in Ragusa, but throughout the province of Dalmatia. The newspapers after announcing the schooner's arrival had swooped down on the prey which promised to yield such a series of sensational articles. The owner of the *Savarena* could not escape the honours and drawbacks of celebrity. His personality was the order of the day. Legend had seized upon him for its own. No one knew who he was, whence he came, or whither he was going. This was just the thing to pique public curiosity. And naturally where nothing is known the field is more open and imagination has more scope.

The reporters, anxious to gratify their readers, had hurried to Gravosa—some of them even went out to the schooner. But the personage about whom rumour was so busy was not to be seen. The orders were precise. The doctor would not receive such visitors. And the answers given to the visitors were always the same.

“Where does the doctor come from?”

“Where he pleases.”

“Where is he going?”

“Where he likes.”

“But who is he?”

"No one knows, and perhaps he does not know any more than you do!"

Not much to be gained for their readers from such replies as these! And so they gave the reins to their imagination, Dr. Antekirtt became all they pleased. He became all that these interviewers at bay thought fit to invent. To some he was a pirate chief. To others he was an African king cruising incognito in quest of knowledge. Some affirmed that he was a political exile; others that (a revolution had driven him from his country) and that he was travelling for purposes of science and art. The readers could take their choice. As to his title of doctor there seemed to be two opinions; in the opinion of some he was a great physician who had effected wonderful cures in desperate cases, in the opinion of others he was a great quack who would find it difficult to produce his diplomas!

Under any circumstances the physicians of Gravosa and Ragusa would have no chance of prosecuting him for the illegal practice of medicine. Dr. Antekirtt maintained a constant reserve, and whenever a patient would have done him the honour to consult him, he invariably declined.

The owner of the *Savarena* took no apartments on shore. He did not even enter any of the hotels in the town. During the first two days after his arrival at Gravosa he hardly got as far as Ragusa. He contented himself with a few walks in the neighbourhood, and two or three times he took with him Point Pescade whose natural intelligence he appreciated.

But if he did not go to Ragusa, one day Pescade went there for him. He had been sent on some confidential errand and these were his replies to the questions asked him when he returned:—

"And so he lives in the Stradone?"

"Yes, doctor, that is to say in the best street of the town. He has a house not far from the place where they show visitors the palace of the old doges; a magnificent house with servants and carriages. Quite in the style of a millionaire."

"And the other?"

"The other, or rather the others," answered Pescade; "they live in the same neighbourhood, but their house is up a narrow, winding, hilly street that takes you to houses that are very second-rate."

"And their house?"

"Their house is humble, small, dismal-looking outside, but I should think it was all right inside. It looks as though the people that lived there were poor and proud."

"The lady?"

"I did not see her, and I heard that she hardly ever went out of the Rue Marinella."

"And her son?"

"I saw him, doctor, as he came back to his mother."

"What was he like?"

"He seemed thoughtful and anxious! They say that the young fellow has seen sorrow! And he looks like it!"

"But, Pescade, you have seen sorrow, and yet you do not look like it."

"Physical suffering is not moral suffering, doctor! That is why I have always hidden mine—and even laughed over it."

After this the doctor stopped his walks about Gravosa. He seemed to be waiting for something that he had not desired to provoke by going to Ragusa, where the news of his arrival in the *Savarena* was, of course, known. He remained on board, and what he was waiting for happened.

On the 29th of May, about eleven o'clock in the morning, the doctor was examining the quays of Gravosa through his telescope, when he suddenly gave orders for the whale-boat to be launched, entered it, and landed at the mole where a man seemed to be watching for him.

"It is he!" said the doctor. "It is really! I recognize him, though he is so-changed."

The man was old, and broken down with age, and although he was not more than seventy, his hair was white, and his head was bowed. His expression was sad and weary, and his face received but little animation from the feeble gaze his tears had often hidden. He remained motionless on the quay, never having lost sight of the boat since it left the schooner.

The doctor looked as though he did not see the old man, still less recognize him. He took no notice of his presence. But before he had taken many steps he advanced towards him, and humbly uncovered.

"Dr. Antekirtt?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the doctor, looking at the poor old man whose eyes as they looked at his gave not the slightest sign of recognition.

Then he added,—

"Who are you, my friend, and what do you want with me?"

"My name is Borik," answered the old man, "and I am in the service of Madame Bathory, and I have been sent by her to ask you to make an appointment for her to see you."

X "Madame Bathory?" repeated the doctor. "Is she the widow of the Hungarian who paid for his patriotism with his life?"

"The same," answered the old man. "And as you have never seen her it would be impossible for you to know her, seeing you are Dr. Antekirtt."

The doctor listened attentively to the old man who kept his eyes on the ground. He seemed to ask if the words contained some hidden meaning.

Then he resumed,—

"What does Madame Bathory want with me?"

"For reasons you can understand, she desires to have an interview with you."

"I will go and see her."

"She would prefer to come to you on board."

"Why?"

"It is important that the interview should be secret."

"Secret? From whom?"

"From her son! It is not desirable that Mr. Pierre should know that Madame Bathory has had a visit from you."

The reply seemed to surprise the doctor; but he did not allow Borik to notice it.

"I prefer to go to Madame Bathory's house," said he.

"Can I not do so in her son's absence?"

"You can, doctor, if you can arrange to come to-morrow. Pierre Bathory is going this evening to Zara, and he will not be back for twenty-four hours."

"And what is Pierre Bathory?"

"He is an engineer, but up to the present he has not been able to secure an appointment. Ah! life has been hard for his mother and him."

"Hard!" answered the doctor. "Has Madame Bathory been in want—?"

He stopped himself. The old man bowed his head and sighed and sobbed.

"Doctor," said he at last, "I cannot tell you more. In the interview which she desires Madame Bathory will tell you all that you should know."

It was evident that the doctor was thoroughly master of himself to conceal his emotion so successfully.

"Where does Madame Bathory live?" asked he.

"At Ragusa, in the Stradone quarter, at No. 17 in the Rue Marinella."

"Can I see Madame Bathory to-morrow between one and two o'clock in the afternoon?"

"You can, doctor, and I will introduce you."

"Tell Madame Bathory she can expect me at that time."

"I thank you, in her name," replied the old man.

Then after some hesitation,—

"You may think," added he, "that she wishes to ask some favour of you."

"And what may that be?" asked the doctor quickly.

"Nothing," answered Borik.

Then, after a humble bow, he walked away down the road from Gravosa to Ragusa.

Evidently the last words had been rather a surprise for the doctor. He remained motionless on the quay, looking after Borik as he walked away. And when he returned on board he shut himself up in his room, and remained there during the rest of the day.

Point Pescade and Cape Matifou took advantage of the holiday thus given them. They did themselves the pleasure of visiting the fair as spectators. To say that the active clown was not tempted to remonstrate at the clumsy juggler, or that the powerful wrestler did not burn to take part in the struggle between the athletes is to say what is contrary to the truth. But both remembered that they had the honour of belonging to the crew of the *Savarena*. They remained as simple spectators, and did not spare the bravos when they thought them deserved.

The next day the doctor went ashore a little after noon.

After he had sent the boat back he started along the road from Gravosa to Ragusa—a fine avenue a mile and a quarter long bordered with villas and shaded with trees. The avenue was not as lively as it would be a few hours later, when it would be crowded with carriages and loungers on horse and foot.

The doctor, thinking all the time of his interview with Madame Bathory, followed one of the side streets and soon reached the Borgo Pille, a kind of stone arm which stretches along the triple line of the fortifications of Ragusa. The

gate was open, and through the three walls gave access to the interior of the city.

A splendid paved road is the Stradone, extending from the Borgo Pille to the suburb of Plocce after passing straight through the town. It runs along the foot of a hill on which rises quite an amphitheatre of houses. At one end is the palace of the doges, a fine monument of fifteenth-century age, with an interior courtyard, Renaissance portico, and semicircular windows whose slender columns are worthy of the best period of Tuscan architecture.

The doctor had not to go as far as this. The Rue Marinella that Borik had mentioned the day before turns off to the left about the middle of the Stradone. If his pace slackened at all it was when he threw a rapid glance at a mansion built of granite whose rich façade and square out-buildings were to the right of him. Through the open gate of the courtyard he could see the master's carriage with superb horses, with the coachman on the box, while a manservant was waiting on the flight of steps under the elegant verandah.

Immediately afterwards a man got into the carriage, the horses came out of the courtyard and the gate closed behind them. This was the individual who three days before had accosted Dr. Antekirtt on the quay at Gravosa; he was the old banker of Trieste, Silas Toronthak.

The doctor, desirous of avoiding a meeting, turned quickly back, and did not resume his journey until the carriage had disappeared at the end of the Stradone.

"Both in the same town!" he murmured. "This is chance; it is not my fault."

Narrow, steep, badly paved, and of poor appearance are the roads which open on to the left of the Stradone. Imagine a large river with the tributaries on one of its sides all mountain torrents! To secure a little air the houses cluster on the hill-side one above the other, and touch one another. Their eyes look into their eyes, if it is allowable so to speak of the windows or dormers that open along their fronts. Thus they mount one over another to the crest of one of the two hills whose summits are crowned by Forts Mincetto and San Lorenzo.

No vehicle could travel there. If the torrent was absent, except on days of heavy rain, the road was none the less a ravine, and its slopes and inequalities were only rendered passable by steps and landing-places. There was a

great contrast between the modest dwellings and the splendid mansions of the Stradone.

The doctor reached the corner of the Rue Marinella and began to mount the interminable staircase which did duty for the road. He had gone about sixty yards when he stopped in front of No. 17.

There the door opened immediately. Old Borik was waiting for the doctor. He introduced him without saying a word into a room cleanly kept, but poorly furnished.

The doctor sat down. There was nothing to show that he felt the least emotion at finding himself in this house—not even when Madame Bathory entered and said,—

“Dr. Antekirtt?”

“Yes,” said the doctor.

“I should have liked to have saved you the trouble of coming so far and so high!” said Madame Bathory.

“I came to call on you, madame, and I hope you will think I am quite at your service.”

“Sir,” replied Madame Bathory, “it was only yesterday that I heard of your arrival at Gravosa, and I immediately sent Borik to request an interview with you.”

“Madame, I am ready to hear what you have to say.”

“I will retire,” said the old man.

“No, you can stay, Borik!” answered Madame Bathory. “You are the only friend our family has, and you had better know all I am going to say to Dr. Antekirtt.”

Madame Bathory sat down, and the doctor sat in front of her, while Borik remained standing at the window.

Professor Stephen Bathory's widow was then in her sixtieth year. If her figure was still upright in spite of the burden of age, her white hair and deeply-wrinkled face showed how much she had had to struggle against grief and misery. But she seemed as energetic as ever. In her was apparent the valiant companion and confiding friend of him who had sacrificed his life for what he deemed to be his duty.

“Sir,” said she in a voice which betrayed how vainly she was trying to hide her emotion, “you being Dr. Antekirtt, I am under an obligation to you, and I ought to tell you what happened at Trieste fifteen years ago—”

“Madame, being Dr. Antekirtt I can spare you the mournful story. I know it and I may add—being Dr. Antekirtt—that I know what has been your life since the never-to-be-forgotten 30th of June, 1867.”

"Will you then tell me," said Madame Bathory, "what is the reason of the interest you take in my life?"

"The interest, madame, that a man must feel for the widow of a Magyar who did not hesitate to risk his life for the independence of his country."

"Did you know Professor Bathory?" asked the widow.

"I knew him, I loved him, and I reverence all who bear his name."

"Are you then a native of the country for which he died?"

"I am of no country, madame."

"Who are you then?"

"A dead man not yet gone to his grave," answered the doctor coldly.

Madame Bathory and Borik started at this unexpected reply; but the doctor immediately continued,—

"However, madame, it is necessary that the story that I asked you not to tell should be told by me, for if there are circumstances about it that you know there are others that you do not know, and of these you will not be ignorant much longer."

"Be it so, then, I am listening."

"Madame," began the doctor, "fifteen years ago three Hungarian nobles became the chiefs of a conspiracy the object of which was to give Hungary her ancient independence. These men were Count Matthias Sandorf, Professor Stephen Bathory, and Count Ladislas Zathmar, three friends united for years in the same hope, three living beings with but one heart.

"On the 8th of June, 1867, the evening before the day on which the signal of the rising was to be given which was to extend through Hungary to Transylvania, Count Zathmar's house at Trieste was entered by the Austrian police. Count Sandorf and his two companions were seized, taken away, and thrown into prison that very night in the donjon of Pisino, and a week or two afterwards were condemned to death.

"A young accountant named Sarcany was arrested at the same time in Count Zathmar's house; he was a perfect stranger to the plot, and he was set at liberty after the affair was over.

"The night before the execution an attempt at escape was made by the prisoners who were left together in the same cell. Count Sandorf and Stephen Bathory availed them-

selves of the lightning-conductor and got out of the donjon of Pisino. They fell into the torrent of the Foiba at the moment when Ladislas Zathmar was seized by the warders and prevented from following them.

"Although the fugitives had very little chance of escaping death, for a subterranean stream bore them through the centre of a country they did not even know, they succeeded in reaching the banks of the Leme Canal, near the town of Rovigno, and at Rovigno they found shelter in the house of a fisherman, Andrea Ferrato.

"This fisherman—a brave fellow—had made all preparations to take them across the Adriatic, when out of pure personal revenge, a Spaniard named Carpena, who had discovered the secret of their retreat, gave information to the police of Rovigno. They tried to escape a second time. But Stephen Bathory was wounded and recaptured, while Mathias Sandorf was pursued to the beach, and sunk under a shower of bullets, the Adriatic never giving up his corpse *see page 103*

("The day after Stephen Bathory and Ladislas Zathmar were shot in the fortress of Pisino. Then, for having given them shelter, the fisherman Andrea Ferrato was sentenced to imprisonment for life, and sent to Stein."

Madame Bathory bowed her head. Sad at heart she had listened without a word to the doctor's story.

"You knew all these details, madame?" asked he.

"Yes, as you do probably, from the newspapers."

"Yes, from the newspapers," was the reply. "But one thing which the newspapers did not tell the public because the matter was conducted in secret, I happened to learn owing to the indiscretion of one of the warders of the fortress, and that I will now tell you."

"Proceed."

"Count Mathias Sandorf and Stephen Bathory were found in Ferrato's house owing to their being betrayed by Carpena, the Spaniard. And they were arrested three weeks before in the house at Trieste owing to traitors having informed against them to the Austrian police."

"Traitors!" exclaimed Madame Bathory.

"Yes, madame, and the proof of the treason was produced at the trial. In the first place these traitors had intercepted a letter addressed to Count Sandorf which they had found on a carrier-pigeon and copied; and in the second place they had managed to obtain a tracing of the grating, which

enabled them to read the despatch. Then when they had read the message they handed it over to the Governor of Trieste. And, doubtless, a share of Count Sandorf's wealth was their reward."

"The wretches! Are they known?" asked Madame Bathory in a voice trembling with emotion.

"No, madame," answered the doctor. "But perhaps the three prisoners knew them, and would have said who they were had they been able to see their families before they died."

It will be remembered that neither Madame Bathory, then away with her son, nor Borik who was in prison at Trieste, had been able to visit the prisoners in their last hours.

"Shall we never know the names of these wretches?" asked Madame Bathory.

"Madame," answered the doctor, "traitors always end by betraying themselves. But this is what I have to say to complete my story,—

"You remained a widow with a boy of eight, almost penniless. Borik, the servant of Count Zathmar, would not leave you after his master's death; but he was poor and had only his devotion to offer you.

"Then, madame, you left Trieste for this humble dwelling at Ragusa. You have worked, worked with your hands to earn sufficient for your material as well as your mental needs. You wished in fact that your son should follow in science the path that his father had made illustrious. But what an incessant struggle it was, what misery you had so bravely to submit to! And with what respect I now bend to the noble woman who has shown such energy as a mother, and made of her son—a man!"

And as he spoke the doctor rose, and a shade of emotion just made itself visible despite his habitual reserve.

Madame Bathory had nothing to say in reply. She waited, not knowing if the doctor had finished, or if he was going on to relate such facts as were personally known to him and concerning which she had asked for the interview.

"However, madame," continued the doctor, divining her thoughts, "human strength has doubtless its limits, and as you fell ill and exhausted with such trials you would doubtless have succumbed if an unknown—no! a friend of Professor Bathory—had not come to your aid. I should *never have said anything about this had not your old servant told me of your wish to see me—*"

"Quite so," answered Madame Bathory. "Have I not to thank Dr. Antekirtt?"

"And why, madame? Because during the last five or six years, in remembrance of the friendship which bound him to Count Sandorf and his two companions, and to help you in your work, Dr. Antekirtt has sent you a sum of a hundred thousand florins? Was he not only too happy to put the money at your disposal? No, madame, it is I, on the contrary, who ought to thank you for having accepted the gift if it was of any help to the widow and son of Stephen Bathory!"

The widow bowed and answered,—

"In any case I have to thank you. That is the first object of the visit I wished to make. But there was a second—"

"What is that, madame?"

"It was—to give you back the money—"

"What, madame?" said the doctor quickly, "you do not wish to accept it?"

"Sir, I do not think I have any right to the money. I do not know Dr. Antekirtt. I never heard his name. The money may be a sort of alms coming from those whom my husband fought and whose pity is hateful to me. And so I do not care to use it, even for the purpose Dr. Antekirtt intended."

"And—so this money—"

"Is untouched."

"And your son?"

"My son will have nothing, but what he owes to himself."

"And to his mother!" added the doctor, with whom such grandeur of soul and energy of character could not but excite admiration and command respect.

Madame Bathory had risen, and from a desk which she unlocked she drew forth a roll of notes which she handed to the doctor.

"Sir," said she, "take back the money, for it is yours, and receive the thanks of a mother as if she had used it to educate her son!"

"The money no longer belongs to me, madame!" replied the doctor, refusing it with a gesture.

"I repeat that it has never belonged to me."

"But if Pierre Bathory can use it—"

"My son will find the situation for which he is fit; and I can trust him as I can trust myself."

"He will not refuse what his father's friend insists on his accepting."

"He will refuse."

"At least, madame, will you allow me to try?"

"I beg you will do nothing, doctor," answered Madame Bathory. "My son does not know that I have received this money, and I do not wish him ever to know it."

"Be it so, madame! I understand your feelings, although I am a stranger and unknown to you! Yes, I understand and admire them! But I repeat, if the money is not yours it is not mine."

Dr. Antekirtt rose. There was nothing in Madame Bathory's refusal to annoy him personally; and her delicacy only filled him with a feeling of profound respect. He bowed to the widow, and was turning to leave when another question stopped him.

"Sir," said Madame Bathory, "you have told me of some miserable proceedings which sent to their deaths Ladislas Zathmar, Stephen Bathory, and Count Sandorf?"

"I said what was true, madame."

"But does any one know these people?"

"Yes, madame."

"Who?"

"God!"

And as he spoke the doctor made a low obeisance and left.

Madame Bathory remained deep in thought. By some secret sympathy, for which she could not account, she felt herself irresistibly drawn towards the mysterious personage who was so mixed up with the events of her life. Would she ever see him again? And if the *Savarena* had only brought him to Ragusa to make this visit, would the yacht go to sea and never return?

The next day's newspapers announced that an anonymous gift of a hundred thousand florins had been made to the hospitals of the town.

It was the gift of Dr. Antekirtt, but was it not also the gift of the widow who had refused it for herself and her son?

CHAPTER VI.

ON BOARD THE "SAVARENA."

THE doctor was in no such hurry to leave Gravosa as Madame Bathory imagined. After endeavouring in vain to help the mother he resolved to try and help the son. If up to then Pierre Bathory had not found the post for which his brilliant acquirements fitted him he would probably not refuse the doctor's offers. To put him in a position worthy of his talents, worthy of the name he bore, was not an act of charity, it was only an act of justice!

But, as Borik had said, Pierre Bathory had gone to Zara on business.

The doctor wrote to him without delay. He wrote that same day. The letter stated that he would be glad to receive Pierre Bathory on board the *Savarena*, having a proposition to make that might interest him.

The letter was posted at Gravosa, and all that could be done then was to wait for the young engineer's return. Meanwhile the doctor continued to live more retired than ever on board the schooner. The *Savarena*, moored in the centre of the harbour with her crew never coming ashore, was as isolated as if she were in the centre of the Mediterranean or the Atlantic.

This was a peculiarity that much exercised the minds of the curious, reporters and others, who had never given up all hope of interviewing the legendary owner, although they had not yet been allowed on board the yacht which was almost as legendary as himself! As Point Pescade and Cape Matifou occasionally had shore-leave they often found themselves quite an attraction to the reporters desirous of obtaining a particle or two of information that might bear working up.

We know that with Point Pescade a certain amount of fun had been introduced on board the schooner, and if Cape Matifou remained as serious as the capstan of which he had the strength, Pescade laughing and singing all day long was as lively as a man-o'-war pennant. When, active as a seaman and agile as a cabin-boy, he was not clambering about the spars to the delight of the crew to whom he was delivering a series of lessons on ground and lofty tumbling, he was amusing them by his interminable jokes. Dr. Ante-

kirtt had recommended him to retain his cheerful spirits And he kept them and yet parted with them to others !

We have said above that he and Cape Matifou often had shore-leave. They in fact were free to come and go as they pleased. The rest of the crew remained on board ; they could go ashore when they liked. And hence the very natural propensity of the curious to follow them and attempt to draw them into conversation. But they could get nothing out of Point Pescade, whether he wished to be silent or to speak, for he had really nothing to tell.

"Who is your Dr. Antekirtt?"

"A famous physician! He can cure all your complaints—even those you are going to take with you to the other world!"

"Is he rich?"

"Hasn't got a halfpenny! I lend him something to go on with every Sunday!"

"But where does he come from?"

"Why, from no one knows where!"

"And where is that?"

"All I can tell you about it is that it is bordered on the north by something big, and on the south by nothing at all!"

Evidently there was not much to be got out of Pescade ; and Cape Matifou remained as dumb as a lump of granite.

But although they said nothing to strangers, the two friends, between themselves, often had a talk about their new master. They liked him already, and they liked him very much. Between them and the doctor there was a sort of chemical affinity, a cohesion which from day to day bound them more firmly together.

And each morning they waited to be called into the cabin to hear him say,—

"My friends, I have need of you."

But nothing came—to their vexation.

"Is this sort of thing going on much longer?" asked Point Pescade. "It is rather hard to remain doing nothing when you have not been brought up to it, eh, Cape?"

"Yes, your arms get rusty," answered Hercules, looking at his enormous biceps motionless as the rods of an engine at rest.

"Shall I tell you something, Cape Matifou?"

"Tell me what you like."

"Do you know what I think about Dr. Antekirtt?"

"No, but tell me, and that will help me to answer you."

"Well, that in his past life there have been things—things! Look at his eyes which every now and then give a glance that almost blinds you like the lightning! And when the thunder rolls—"

"It makes a noise."

"Exactly, Cape Matifou, a noise . . . and I fancy we shall come in useful at that game!"

It was not without reason that Point Pescade spoke in this way. Although the most complete calm reigned on board the schooner, the intelligent little fellow could not help noticing certain things which set him thinking. Nothing could be more evident than that the doctor was not a simple tourist on a yacht cruise in the Mediterranean. The *Savarena* was the centre of a web of many threads whose ends were held in the hands of her mysterious owner.

Letters and despatches seemed to arrive from every corner of the mighty sea whose waters bathe the shores of so many different countries. They came from the French coast, the Spanish coast, the coast of Morocco, of Algeria, and Tripoli. Who sent them? Evidently correspondents occupied on certain matters the gravity of which could not be mistaken—unless they were patients consulting the celebrated doctor by correspondence, which did not seem to be probable.

In the telegraph office at Ragusa the meaning of these messages was a mystery, for they were in an unknown tongue of which the doctor alone seemed to know the secret. And even when the language was intelligible what sense could be made out of such phrases as—

"Almeira. They thought they were on the track of Z. R. False trail now abandoned."

"Recovered the correspondent of H. V. 5. . . . Connected with troop K. 3 between Catania and Syracuse. To follow."

"In the Manderaggio, La Valetta, Malta, have verified the passage T. R. 7."

"Cyrene. Wait fresh orders. Flotilla of Antek—ready. Electric No. 3 under pressure day and night."

"R. O. 3. Since death. Both disappeared."

And this other telegram containing some special news by means of an agreed-upon number.

"2117. Sarc. Formerly a broker. Service Toronth. Ceased connection Tripoli of Africa."

And to nearly all these despatches there was sent from the *Savarena* :—

“Let the search proceed. Spare neither money nor trouble. Send new papers.”

Here was an exchange of incomprehensible correspondence that seemed to embrace the whole circuit of the Mediterranean. The doctor was not as much at leisure as he wished to appear. Notwithstanding professional secrecy it was difficult to prevent the fact of this interchange of mysterious telegrams from becoming known to the public ; and hence a redoubling of the curiosity about the enigmatic physician.

In the upper circles of Ragusa Silas Toronthal was perhaps the most perplexed of men. On the quay at Gravosa he had met the doctor a few minutes after the *Savarena* arrived. During this meeting he had experienced in the first place a strong feeling of repulsion, and in the second an equally strong feeling of curiosity, which, up to the present, circumstances had not allowed the banker to gratify.

To tell the truth the doctor's presence had had a disturbing influence on Toronthal which he could not explain. By preserving the incognito at Ragusa, and continuing the difficulty of access, the banker's desire to see him again had been greatly increased ; and several times he had gone to Gravosa. There he had stood on the quay, looking at the schooner, and burning with envy to get on board. One day even he had been rowed out to her, and received the invariable reply,—

“Dr. Antekirtt does not see anybody.”

The result of all this was that Toronthal felt a sort of chronic irritation in face of an obstacle he could not overcome. And so, at his own expense, he set a detective to watch if the mysterious stranger made any visits in Gravosa or the neighbourhood.

We may judge therefore of the uneasiness with which the banker heard that Borik had had an interview with the doctor, and that the day following a visit had been made to Madame Bathory.

“Who is this man ?” he asked himself.

But what had he to fear in his present position ? For fifteen years nothing had transpired as to his former machinations. And yet anything referring to the family of those *he had betrayed and sold rendered him uneasy*. If remorse *never troubled his conscience fear occasionally did, and the*

appearance of this doctor, powerful owing to his fame and powerful owing to his wealth, was anything but reassuring to him.

"But who is this man?" he repeated. "Who is he that comes to Ragusa and visits Madame Bathory? Did she send for him as a physician? What can she and he have in common?"

To this there could be no answer. One thing comforted Toronthal a little, and that was that the visit to Madame Bathory was not repeated.

The banker had made up his mind that cost what it might he would make the doctor's acquaintance. The thought possessed him day and night. By a kind of illusion to which over-excited brains are subject he fancied that he would recover his peace of mind if he could only see Dr. Antekirtt, talk to him and ascertain the motives of his arrival at Gravosa. And he sought about for some way of obtaining an interview.

And he thought he had found it, and in this way. For many years Madame Toronthal had suffered from a languor which the Ragusan doctors were powerless to overcome. In spite of all their advice, in spite of all the attentions of her daughter, Madame Toronthal was not quite bedridden, but she was visibly wasting away. Was her complaint due to mental causes? Perhaps—but no one had been able to discover it. The banker alone was aware that his wife owing to her knowledge of his past life had conceived an invincible disgust at an existence which filled her with horror. Whatever might be the cause of Madame Toronthal's state of health, which had puzzled the doctors of the town, it seemed to afford the banker the opportunity he desired for entering into communication with the owner of the *Savarena*; and he wrote a letter and sent it off to the schooner by a messenger. "He would be glad," he said, "to have the advice of a physician of such undoubted distinction."

Then apologizing for the inconvenience it would occasion to one living in such retirement, he begged Dr. Antekirtt "to appoint a time when he could expect him at his house in the Stradone."

When the doctor received this letter in the morning, he looked first at the signature, and then not a muscle of his face moved. He read the letter through to the last line, and yet nothing showed the thoughts it suggested.

What reply should he give? Should he take advantage

of the opportunity to visit Toronthal's house, and become acquainted with his family? But to enter the house even in the character of a physician, would that not embarrass his future action?

The doctor hesitated not a moment. He answered by a very short note, which was handed to the banker's servant. All it said was,—

"Dr. Antekirtt regrets that he is unable to attend Madame Toronthal. He does not practise in Europe."

When the banker received this laconic reply he crumpled it in his hands in his vexation. It was evident that the doctor would have nothing to do with him. It was a transparent refusal indicative of a settled plan.

"And then," said he to himself, "if he does not practise in Europe, why did he go to Madame Bathory—if it was in the character of a physician that he went to her? What was he doing there? What is there between them?"

The uncertainty worried Toronthal exceedingly. His life had become a burden to him since the doctor had appeared at Gravosa, and would continue to be so until the *Savarena* had sailed. He said not a word to his wife or daughter about his futile letter. He kept his anxiety to himself. But he did not give up watching the doctor's movements, and kept himself informed of all his proceedings at Gravosa and Ragusa.

The very next day came a new and equally serious cause of alarm.

Pierre Bathory had returned disappointed to Zara. He had not been able to accept the position that had been offered to him—the management of important smelting-works in Herzegovina.

"The terms would not suit me." That was all he said to his mother. Madame Bathory did not think it worth while to ask why the terms were unacceptable; a look sufficed her. Then she handed him a letter that had arrived during his absence.

This was the letter in which Dr. Antekirtt asked Pierre Bathory to visit him on board the *Savarena* to discuss a proposal he was in a position to make to him.

Pierre Bathory handed the letter to his mother. The doctor's offer was no surprise to her.

"I was expecting that," she said.

"You expected this?" asked the young man in astonishment.

"Yes, Pierre! Dr. Antekirtt came to see me while you were away."

"Do you know who this man is then that everybody is talking about at Ragusa?"

"No; but Dr. Antekirtt knew your father, and he was the friend of Count Sandorf and Count Zathmar, and in that character he came here."

"Mother," asked Pierre, "what proof did the doctor give that he was my father's friend?"

"None," answered Madame Bathory, who did not care to mention the hundred thousand florins that she wished to keep secret from all but herself and the doctor.

"And suppose he is some informer, some spy, some Austrian detective?"

"You will see that."

"Do you advise me to go, then?"

"Yes, that is my advice. We should not neglect a man who is desirous of befriending you for the friendship he bore your father."

"But what has he come to Ragusa for?" asked Pierre.

"Has he any business in this country?"

"Perhaps he thinks of doing something. He is supposed to be very rich, and it is possible that he thinks of offering you a post worth accepting."

"I will go and see him, and find out."

"Go to-day then, and at the same time return the visit that I am unable to return myself."

Pierre embraced his mother, and it seemed as he lingered near her as though some secret was choking him—*some* secret that he dare not tell. What was there then in his heart so sad and serious that he dare not *confide* it to his mother?

"My poor child," murmured Madame Bathory.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon when Pierre entered the Stradone on his way to the harbour of Ragusa. As he passed Toronthal's house he stopped for an instant only for an instant. He looked up at one of the wings the windows of which opened on to the road. The blinds were drawn. Had the house been uninhabited it could not have been more shut up.

Pierre Bathory continued his walk which he had slackened than stopped. But his movements *had* escaped the notice of a woman who was seated opposite side of the Stradone.

She was above the usual height. Her age? Between forty and fifty. Her walk? Almost mechanical. This foreigner—her nationality could be easily seen from her brown frizzled hair and Moorish complexion—was wrapped in a dark coloured cloak, with its hood thrown over her head-dress ornamented with its sequins. Was she a Bohemian, a Gitana, a Gipsy, an Egyptian, a Hindoo? So many types did she resemble that it was difficult to say. Anyhow she was not asking for charity and did not look as though she would accept any. She was there on her own account, or on the account of somebody-else, watching not only what went on at Toronthal's, but also what took place in the Rue Marinella.

As soon as she caught sight of the young man coming into the Stradone and walking towards Gravosa, she followed so as to keep him in view; but so adroitly that he was unaware of her proceedings. Besides he was too much occupied to bother himself with what was taking place behind him. When he slackened his pace in front of Toronthal's, the woman slackened hers. When he started on again, she started on, suiting her pace to his.

Reaching the first gate of Ragusa, Pierre strode through it swiftly, but not so swiftly enough to distance the stranger. Once through the gate she found him hurrying on to Gravosa and twenty yards behind him she followed down the avenue.

At the same moment Silas Toronthal was returning to Ragusa in an open carriage, so that he could not avoid meeting Pierre.

Seeing them both the Moor stopped for a moment. Perhaps, she thought, they will have something to say to each other. And so with kindling eyes she slipped behind a neighbouring tree. But if the men were to speak, how could she hear what they said?

They did not speak. Toronthal had seen Pierre twenty yards before he reached him, and instead of replying with the haughty salute he had used on the quay at Gravosa when his daughter was with him, he turned away his head as the young man raised his hat and his carriage drove rapidly on towards Ragusa.

The stranger lost nothing of this little scene: and a feeble smile animated her impassible face.

Pierre, more in sorrow than anger, continued his walk without turning back to look after Toronthal.

The Moor followed him from afar, and might have been heard to mutter in Arabic,—

“It is time that he came!”

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA.

A QUARTER of an hour afterwards, Pierre arrived on the quays of Gravosa. For a few minutes he stopped to admire the schooner whose burgee was lazily fluttering from the mainmast-head.

“Whence comes this Dr. Antekirtt?” he said to himself. “I do not know that flag.”

Then addressing himself to a pilot who was standing near he asked,—

“Do you know what flag that is?”

The pilot did not know. All he could say about the schooner was that she had come from Brindisi, and that all her papers had been found correct by the harbour-master; and as she was a pleasure yacht the authorities had respected her incognito.

Pierre Bathory then hired a boat and was rowed off to the *Savarena*, while the Moor, very much surprised, watched him as he neared the yacht.

In a few minutes the young man had set foot on the schooner's deck and asked if Dr. Antekirtt were on board. Doubtless the order which denied admittance to strangers did not apply to him, for the boatswain immediately replied that the doctor was in his room. Pierre presented his card and asked if he could see the doctor. A sailor took the card and disappeared down the companion which led to the aft-saloon. A minute afterwards he returned with the message that the doctor was expecting Mr. Pierre Bathory.

The young man was immediately introduced into a saloon where only a half-light found its way in through the curtains overhead. But when he reached the double doors, both of which were open, the light from the glass panels at the end shone on him strong and full.

In the half-shadow was Dr. Antekirtt seated on a divan. At the sudden appearance of the son of Stephen Bathory he felt a sort of thrill go through him, unnoticed by Pierre, and these words escaped, so to speak, from his lips,—

"'Tis he! 'tis he!"

And in truth Pierre Bathory was the very image of his father, as the noble Hungarian had been at his age. There was the same energy in his eyes, the same nobleness in his attitude, the same look prompt at enthusiasm for all that was good and true and beautiful.

"Mr. Bathory," said the doctor, rising, "I am very glad to see you in response to the invitation contained in my letter."

And he motioned Pierre to sit down in the other angle of the saloon.

The doctor had spoken in Hungarian which he knew was the young man's native language.

"Sir," said Pierre Bathory, "I would have come to return the visit you made to my mother even if you had not asked me to come on board. I know you are one of those unknown friends to whom the memory of my father and the two patriots who died with him is so dear. I thank you for having kept a place for them in your remembrance."

In thus evoking the past, now so far away, in speaking of his father, and his friends Mathias Sandorf and Ladislav Zathmar, Pierre could not hide his emotion.

"Forgive me," he said. "When I think of these things I cannot help—"

Did he not feel then that Dr. Antekirtt was more affected than he was, and that if he did not reply it was the better to keep hidden what he felt?

"Mr. Bathory," he said after a lengthened pause, "I have nothing to forgive in so natural a grief. You are of Hungarian blood, and what child of Hungary would become so denaturalized as not to feel his heart ache at such remembrances? At that time, fifteen years ago—yes, already fifteen years have passed—you were still young. You can scarcely remember your father and the events in which he took part."

"My mother is his other self!" answered Pierre. "She brought me up in the creed of him she has never ceased to mourn. All that he did, all he tried to do, all the life of devotion to his people and his country, I have learnt from her. I was only eight years old when my father

died, but it seems that he is still living, for he lives again in my mother."

"You love your mother as she deserves to be loved," said the doctor; "and we venerate her as if she were a martyr's widow."

Pierre could only thank the doctor for thus expressing himself. His heart beat loudly as he listened; and he did not notice the coldness, natural or acquired, with which the doctor spoke, and which seemed to be characteristic.

"May I ask if you knew my father personally?" asked he.

"Yes, Mr. Bathory," was the reply, not without a certain hesitation; "but I knew him as a student knew a professor who was one of the most distinguished men in the Hungarian universities. I studied medicine and physics in your country. I was one of your father's pupils, for he was only my senior by twelve years. I learnt to esteem him, to love him, for I felt that all his teaching was imbued with that spirit which made him later on an ardent patriot, and I only left him when I went away to finish the studies I had begun in Hungary. But shortly afterwards Professor Stephen Bathory sacrificed his position for the sake of ideas he believed to be noble and just, and no private interest could stop him in his path of duty. It was then that he left Presburg to take up his residence in Trieste. Your mother had sustained him with her advice, and encompassed him with her thoughtfulness, during that time of anxiety. She possessed all the virtues of a woman as your father had all the virtues of a man. You will forgive me for calling up your sorrowful past, and if I have done so it is only because you are not one of those that can forget it!"

"No, sir, no," replied the young man with the enthusiasm of his age; "no more than Hungary can forget the three men who were sacrificed for her—Ladislav Zathmar, Stephen Bathory, and the boldest of the three, Mathias Sandorf!"

"If he was the boldest," answered the doctor, "do not think that his two companions were inferior to him in devotion, in sacrifices, or in courage! The three are worthy of the same respect! The three have the same right to be avenged."

The doctor paused, and then asked if Madame Bathory had told him the circumstances under which the chiefs of the conspiracy had been delivered up; if she had told him that treachery had been at work? But the young engineer had not heard anything.

In fact Madame Bathory had been silent on the subject. She shrank from instilling hatred into her son's life, and perhaps sending him on a false track, for no one knew the names of the traitors. And the doctor thought that for the present he had better maintain the same reserve.

What he did not hesitate to say was that without the odious deed of the Spaniard who had betrayed the fugitives in the house of Ferrato the fisherman, Count Sandorf and Stephen Bathory would probably have escaped. And once beyond the Austrian frontier, no matter in what country, every door would be opened to receive them.

"With me," he concluded, "they would have found a refuge which never would have failed them."

"In what country, sir?"

"In Cephalonia, where I then lived."

"Yes, in the Ionian Islands under the protection of the Greek flag they would have been safe, and my father would be still alive."

For a minute or two the conversation dropped with this return to the past. The doctor broke the silence.

"Our recollections have taken us far from the present. Shall we now talk about it, and especially of the future I have been thinking of for you?"

"I am ready," answered Pierre. "In your letter you gave me to understand that it might be to my interest—"

"In short, Mr. Bathory, as I am aware of your mother's devotion during the childhood of her son, I am also aware that you are worthy of her, and after many a harsh experience you have become a man—"

"A man," said Pierre bitterly, "a man who has not enough to keep himself, nor to give his mother a return for what she has done for him."

"That is so!" answered the doctor; "but the fault is not yours. I know how difficult it is for any one to obtain a position with so many rivals struggling against you. You are an engineer?"

"Yes. I passed out of the schools with the title, but I am an engineer unattached, and have no employment from the State. I have been seeking an appointment with some manufacturing company, and up to the present I have found nothing to suit me—at least at Ragusa."

"And elsewhere?"

"Elsewhere?" replied Pierre, with some hesitation.

"Yes! Was it not about some business of the sort that you went to Zara a few days ago?"

"I had heard of a situation which a metallurgical company had vacant—"

"And this situation?"

"It was offered to me."

"And you did not accept it?"

"I had to refuse it, because I should have had to settle permanently in Herzegovina."

"In Herzegovina? Would not Madame Bathory have gone with you?"

"My mother would go wherever my interests required."

"And why did you not take the place?" persisted the doctor.

"Sir," said the young man, "as I am situated I have strong reasons for not leaving Ragusa."

And as he made the remark the doctor noticed that he seemed embarrassed. His voice trembled as he expressed his desire—more than his desire—his resolution not to leave Ragusa.

What was the reason for his-refusing the offer that had been made?

"That will make what I was going to offer you unacceptable," said the doctor.

"Should I have to go—"

"Yes—to a country where I am about commencing some very considerable works which I should put under your management."

"I am very sorry, but believe me, that as I have made this resolution—"

"I believe you, and perhaps I regret it as much as you. I should have been very glad to have been able to help you, in consideration of my feelings towards your father."

Pierre made no reply. A prey to internal strife he showed that he was suffering—and suffering acutely. The doctor felt sure that he wished to speak, and dared not. But at last an irresistible impulse impelled Pierre towards the man who had shown such-sympathy with his mother and himself.

"Sir—sir," said he with an emotion that he took no pains to hide, "do not think it is caprice, or obstinacy, that makes me refuse your offer. You have spoken like a friend of Stephen Bathory. You would show me all the friendship you felt for him! I feel it, although I have only known you a few minutes. Yes, I feel for you all the affection that I should have had for my father!"

"Pierre! my child!" said the doctor, seizing the young man's hand.

"Yes! sir!" continued Pierre, "and I will tell you all! I am in-love with a young lady in this town! Between us there is the gulf which separates poverty from wealth. But I will not look at the abyss, and maybe she has not seen it! If occasionally I can see her in the street or at the window, it gives me a happiness I have not strength to renounce! At the idea that I must go away, and go away for long, I become insane! Ah! sir! understand me, and forgive my refusal!"

"Yes, Pierre," answered the doctor, "I understand you and I have nothing to forgive. You have done well to tell me so frankly; and it may lead to something! Does your mother know of what you have been telling me?"

"I have said nothing to her yet. I have not dared, because in our modest position she would perhaps have the wisdom to deprive me of all hope! But she may have divined and understood what I suffer—what I must suffer."

"Pierre," said the doctor, "you have confided in me, and you are right to have done so! Is the young lady rich?"

"Very rich! Too rich! Yes, too rich for me!"

"Is she worthy of you?"

"Ah! sir, could I dream of giving my mother a daughter that was not worthy of her?"

"Well, Pierre," continued the doctor, "perhaps the abyss may be bridged!"

"Sir," said the young man, "do not encourage me with hopes that are unrealizable."

"Unrealizable!"

And the tone in which the doctor uttered the word betrayed such confidence in himself that Pierre Bathory seemed as it were transformed, as if he believed himself master of the present, master of the future.

"Yes, Pierre," continued the doctor, "have confidence in me. When you think fit, and think the time has come, you will tell me the lady's name—"

"Why should I hide it, now? It is Sava Toronthal!"

The effort the doctor made to keep calm as he heard the hated name was as that of a man who strives to prevent himself from starting when the lightning strikes at his feet. *An instant—several seconds—he remained motionless and mute.*

Then in a voice that betrayed not the slightest emotion he remarked,—

“Good! Pierre; good! I must-think it over! Let me see—”

“I will go,” interrupted the young man, clasping the hand which the doctor held out to him, “and allow me to thank you as I would have-thanked my father.”

He left the doctor alone in the saloon, and then gaining the deck he entered his boat, landed at the quay, and returned to Ragusa.

The stranger who had been waiting for him all the time he was on board the *Savarena* followed him back.

Pierre felt very much happier in his mind. At last his heart had been opened! He had found a friend in whom he could trust—more than a friend, perhaps. To him this had been one of those happy days of which fortune is so stingy in this world.

And how could he doubt it when, as he passed along the Stradone, he saw the corner of the curtain at one of the windows of Toronthal's house slowly rise and suddenly fall!

But the stranger had also seen the movement, and as Pierre turned up the Rue Marinella, she remained motionless at the corner. Then she hurried to the telegraph office and despatched a message which contained but one word—and that was—

“Come!”

The address of that monosyllabic message was—

“Sarcany; to be called for; Syracuse. Sicily.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MOUTHS OF THE CATTARO.

AND so destiny, which plays so predominant a part in the events of this world, had brought together in Ragusa the families of Bathory and Toronthal; and brought them not only to the same town, but to the same quarter of that town—the Stradone. And Sava Toronthal and Pierre Bathory had seen each other, met each other, loved each other! Pierre the son of a man who had been betrayed

to death, and Sava the daughter of the man who-betrayed him!

As soon as the engineer had left the schooner, the doctor might have been heard to say to himself,—

“And Pierre goes away full of hope, hope he never had before, hope that I have just given him!”

Was the doctor the man to undertake a merciless struggle against this fate? Did he feel himself strong enough to dispose of the affairs of humankind at his will? That force, that moral energy, which must be his if he was to succeed in fighting destiny, would it not fail him?

“No! I will fight against it!” he said. “Such love is hateful, criminal! That Pierre Bathory should become the husband of Toronthal’s daughter and one day learn the truth would be to deprive him of all hope of revenge! He could only kill himself in despair! And I will tell him all if need be! I will tell him what this family has done to his! At all costs I will break this thing off!”

And in truth such an union did seem monstrous. It will be remembered that in his conversation with Madame Bathory the doctor had told her that the three chiefs of the Trieste conspiracy had been the victims of an abominable scheme which had been brought to light in the course of the trial, and that this had come to his knowledge through the indiscretion of one of the Pisino warders.

And it will also be remembered that Madame Bathory for certain reasons had thought it best to say nothing of this treachery to her son. Besides she did not know who were the traitors. She did not know that one of them was wealthy and respected and lived at Ragusa, a few yards away from her in the Stradone. The doctor had not named them? Why? Doubtless because the hour had not yet come for him to unmask them! But he knew them. He knew that Silas Toronthal was one of the traitors and that Sarcany was the other. And if he had not taken her more into his confidence, it was because he reckoned on Pierre’s assistance, and wished to associate the son in the retribution with which he was about to visit the murderers of his father.

And that is why he could not say more to the son of Stephen Bathory without breaking his heart.

“It matters little!” he repeated. “I shall break off this match.”

Having made up his mind, what did he do? Reveal to

Madame Bathory and her son the history of the banker of Trieste? But did he hold material proofs of the treachery? No, for Mathias Sarcany, Stephen Bathory, and Ladislas Zathmar who alone had these proofs were dead. Did he spread through the town the report of this abominable act without first telling Madame Bathory? That would probably have been enough to open an abyss between Pierre and the young lady—an abyss that could not be bridged. But if the secret were divulged would not Silas Toronthal try to leave Ragusa?

But the doctor did not want the banker to disappear. He wanted the traitor to remain ready for the executioner when the day of execution arrived. And were he to disappear events might turn out differently to what he had imagined.

After having weighed the question in all its pros and cons the doctor resolved to proceed more vigorously against Toronthal. In the first place it was necessary to get Pierre away from the town where the honour of his name was in danger. Yes! He would spirit him away so that no one could trace him! When he had him in his power he would tell him all he knew about Toronthal and Sarcany his accomplice, and he would associate him with him in his work. But he had not a day to lose.

It was with this object that a telegram from the doctor brought to the mouths of the Cattaro, south of Ragusa on the Adriatic, one of the swiftest vessels of his fleet. She was one of those huge launches which served as the fore-runners of our modern torpedo boats. Her long steel tube was about forty-four yards in length and seventy tons measurement, had neither mast nor funnel, and carried simply an exterior deck and a steel cage with lenticular scuttles for the steersman who could be securely shut up in it when the state of the sea rendered such precautions necessary. She could slip through the water without losing time or distance in following the undulations of the surge; and having a speed excelling that of all the torpedo boats of the Old or New World could easily travel her thirty miles an hour. Owing to this excessive speed the doctor had been able to accomplish many extraordinary voyages, and hence the gift of ubiquity with which he had been credited, for in very short intervals of time he had been able to run from the farthest corners of the Archipelago to the outermost borders of the Lybian Sea.

There was however one striking difference between steam launches and the doctor's boats, and that was that instead of superheated steam it was electricity that furnished their motive power by means of powerful accumulators invented by himself long before the later inventions that have become so famous. In these accumulators he could store the electricity to a practically unlimited extent. These despatch boats were known as *Electrics*, with merely a number denoting the order in which they had been built. It was *Electric No. 2* that had been telegraphed for to the mouths of the Cattaro.

Having given these orders, the doctor waited for the moment of action, and warned Point Pescade and Cape Matifou that he would soon require their services. It is hardly necessary to say that they were very glad at having at last an opportunity of showing their devotion. One cloud, one only, threw its shadow over the gladness with which they welcomed the doctor's warning.

Point Pescade was to wait at Ragusa to keep watch on the houses in the Stradone and Rue Marinella, while Cape Matifou was to go with the doctor to Cattaro. This was a separation—the first after so many years of misery that they had lived through together—and hence a touching anxiety on the part of Cape Matifou in thinking that he would no longer be near his little Pescade!

"Patience, old Cape, patience! It will not last! The play's beginning, and unless I am mistaken it is a splendid piece they are getting ready for us, and we have a famous manager who has given us both good telling parts! Believe me you will have no reason to complain of yours."

"Think so?"

"I am sure of it! Ah! No lover's part for you! It is not in your nature, although you are so sentimental! No traitor's part either! You are too big for that! No, you are to be the good genius coming in at the end to punish vice and recompense virtue!"

"Like they do in the travelling booths?" answered Cape Matifou.

"Like they do in the travelling booths! Yes! I can see you in the part, old Cape! At the moment the traitor expects it least you appear with your huge hands open, and you have only to clasp him in them to bring about the end! *If the part is not long, it is sympathetic, and what cheers from the gallery you will get during the run!*"

"Yes, perhaps so," answered Hercules; "but all the same we must separate."

"For a few days! Only promise me you will not destroy yourself during my absence! Get your six meals regularly and grow! And now clasp me in your arms; or rather pretend to do so as if you were on the stage, else you will risk stifling me. We must get used to a little play-acting in this world! Now embrace me again, and never forget your little Point Pescade who will never forget his big Cape Matifou!"

Such was the affecting-farewell of these two friends when their separation came; and Cape Matifou was truly sad at heart when he returned on board the *Savarena*. The same day his companion took up his quarters in Ragusa with orders not to lose sight of Pierre Bathory, to watch Toronthal's house, and to keep the doctor informed of all that went on.

During this time Point Pescade should have met in the Stradone with the mysterious stranger who was evidently on a similar mission; and doubtless he would have done so had not the Moor after sending off the telegram left Ragusa for some place further south, where Sarcany could join her. Pescade was thus not interfered with in his operations, and could carry out his instructions with his habitual intelligence.

Pierre Bathory never imagined that he had been so closely watched, nor did he know that for the eyes of the Moor there had now been substituted those of Point Pescade. After his conversation with the doctor, after the avowal he had made, he had felt more confident. Why should he now hide from his mother what had taken place on board the *Savarena*? Would she not read it in his look and even in his soul? Would she not see that a change had taken place in him, and that grief and despair had given place to hope and happiness?

Pierre, then, told his mother everything. He told her who the girl was that he loved, and how it was for her that he had refused to leave Ragusa. His post was of little consequence! Had not Dr. Antekirtt told him to hope?

"That is why you suffered so much, my child," answered Madame Bathory. "May heaven help you and bring you all the happiness we have missed up to now!"

Madame Bathory lived in great retirement in her house in the Rue Marinella. She did not go out except to

church with her old servant, for she attended to her religious duties with all the practical and austere piety of her race. She had never heard tell of the Toronthals. Never had she looked at the large mansion she passed on her way to the Church of the Redeemer, which is situated just where the Stradone begins. She therefore did not know the daughter of the old banker of Trieste.

And so Pierre had to describe her and tell what she had said to him when they first met, and how he did not doubt that his love was returned. And all these details he gave with an ardour that his mother was not surprised to find in the tender passionate soul of her son.

But when Pierre told her of the position of the Toronthals, when she found that the young lady would be one of the richest heiresses of Ragusa, she could not conceal her uneasiness. Would the banker consent to his only child becoming a poor man's wife?

But Pierre did not think it necessary to insist on the coolness and even contempt with which Toronthal had always received him. He was content to repeat what the doctor had said to him—how he had told him that he could, that he ought even, have confidence in his father's friend who felt for him a quasi-paternal affection. A fact which Madame Bathory did not doubt, knowing what he had already wished to do for her and hers. And in the end, like her son and like Borik, who thought it his duty to give his advice, she did not abandon all hope; and there was a trifling gleam of happiness in the humble home in the Rue Marinella.

On the following Sunday Pierre had again the happiness of seeing Sava Toronthal at church. The girl's face, always rather sad in its expression, lighted up when she caught sight of Pierre, as if it had been transfigured. They spoke to each other with their looks, and they understood each other. And when Sava returned home, she bore with her a portion of that happiness she had so clearly read in the young man's countenance.

But Pierre had not again seen the doctor. He waited for an invitation to revisit the schooner. Some days elapsed, but no letter came.

"Doubtless," he thought, "the doctor is making inquiries. He has come or sent to Ragusa to ascertain something about the Toronthals! Perhaps he has been getting an *introduction* to Sava. Yes! It is not impossible that he has

already seen her father and spoken to him on the subject ! A line from him, only a word, how happy it would make me—particularly if that word were Come ! ”

The word did not arrive, and Madame Bathory had some trouble in calming her son's impatience. He began to despair, and now it was her turn to give him hope, although she was not without anxiety. The house in the Rue Marinella was open to the doctor, as he knew, and, even without this new interest he had taken in Pierre, was not the interest he took in the family for whom he had already shown such sympathy enough to attract him there ?

And so Pierre after counting the days and the hours had no longer strength to resist. He must, at all costs, again see Dr. Antekirtt. An invincible force urged him to Gravosa. Once on board the schooner, his impatience would be understood, his action would be excused even if it were premature.

On the 7th of June at eight o'clock in the morning Pierre Bathory left his mother without saying anything to her of his plans. He left Ragusa and hurried to Gravosa at such a rate that Point Pescade could hardly keep up with him. As he reached the quay in front of the moorings occupied by the *Savarena* at his last visit he stopped.

The schooner was not in the harbour.

Pierre looked about to see if she had changed her place. He could not see her anywhere.

He asked a sailor who was walking on the quay what had become of Dr. Antekirtt's yacht.

The *Savarena* had sailed the night before, he replied, and he no more knew where she had gone than where she had come from.

The schooner gone ! The doctor had disappeared as mysteriously as he had arrived.

Pierre went back to Ragusa in greater despair than ever.

Had an accident revealed to the young man that the schooner had left for Cattaro, he would not have hesitated to follow her. But his journey would have been useless. The *Savarena* reached the mouths, but did not enter them. The doctor accompanied by Matifou went on shore in one of her boats, and the yacht departed for some unknown destination.

There is no more curious spot in Europe, and perhaps in the Old World, than this orographic and hydrographic curiosity known as the mouths of Cattaro. Cattaro is not

a river as any one might be tempted to think; it is a town, the seat of a bishop, and the capital of a Circle. The mouths are six bays side by side communicating with each other by narrow channels which can be sailed through in six hours. Of this string of lakes which stretch along in front of the mountains of the coast, the last, situated at the foot of Mount Norri, marks the limit of the Austrian Empire. Beyond that is the Ottoman Empire.

It was at the entrance of the mouths that the doctor landed, after a rapid passage. There one of the swift electric boats was in waiting to take him to the last of the bays. After doubling the point of Ostro, passing before Castel Nuovo, between the two panoramas of towns and chapels, before Stolivo, before Perasto, a celebrated place of pilgrimage, before Risano, where the Dalmatian costumes begin to mingle with Turkish and Albanian, he arrived from lake to lake at the last bight at the bottom of which is built Cattaro.

Electric No. 2 was moored a few cable-lengths from the town on the sleepy gloomy waters which not a breath of air troubled on this fine night in June.

But it was not on board of her that the doctor intended to take up his quarters. For the purposes of his ulterior projects he did not wish it to be known that this swift vessel belonged to him; and he landed at Cattaro and with Cape Matifou accompanying him went off to one of the hotels in the town.

The boat that had brought them was soon lost in the darkness to the right of the harbour up a small creek where it could remain invisible. There, at Cattaro the doctor could be as unknown as if he had taken refuge in the most obscure of the world's corners. The Bocchais, the inhabitants of this rich district of Dalmatia, who are of Slavish origin, would hardly notice the presence of a stranger amongst them.

From the bay it looks as though Cattaro were built in hollows on the side of Mount Norri. The first houses border on a quay, an esplanade won from the sea at the apex of the acute angle of a small lake which runs deep into the mountain mass. It is at the extremity of this funnel with its splendid trees and background of verdure that the Lloyd mail boats, and large coasters of the Adriatic, run in to unload.

The doctor was busy in search of a lodging. Cape

Matifou had followed him without even asking where they had landed. It might be in Dalmatia, or it might be in China, but it mattered little to him. Like a faithful dog he followed his master. He was only a tool perhaps, a machine, a machine to turn, to bore, to pierce, which the doctor kept till he thought the time had come to use it.

Having left the quincunxes of the quay they entered the fortifications of Cattaro; then they passed along a series of narrow hilly roads in which is crowded a population of from four to five thousand. As he did so they were closing the Marine Gate—a gate which remains open only till eight o'clock at night except on the arrival of the mail boats.

The doctor soon discovered that there was not a single hotel in the town, and he had to look about for lodgings. At last he found a house, and obtained a room on the ground floor in a sufficiently respectable street. At first it was arranged that Cape Matifou should be boarded by the proprietor, and although the price charged was enormous on account of his enormous proportions, the matter was soon satisfactorily settled. Dr. Antekirtt reserved the right of taking his meals elsewhere in the town.

In the morning, after leaving Cape Matifou to employ his time as he pleased, the doctor walked to the post-office for any letters or telegrams that might be waiting for him. There was nothing there, and then he went for a stroll out of the town. He soon found a restaurant patronized by the better class of the inhabitants, and Austrian officers and officials who looked upon being quartered here as equivalent to exile, or even to being in prison.

Now, the doctor was only waiting for the moment to act; and this was his plan. He had decided to kidnap Pierre Bathory. But to take him away on board the schooner while she lay at Ragusa would have been difficult. The young engineer was well known at Gravosa, and as public attention had been attracted to the *Savarena*, the affair even if it succeeded would be very much noised about. Further, the yacht being only a sailing vessel, if any steamer went after her from the harbour she would almost be certain to be caught.

At Cattaro, on the contrary, Pierre could be spirited off much more quietly. Nothing would be easier than to get him there. At a word sent from the doctor, there was no doubt but that he would start immediately. He was as

unknown at Cattaro as the doctor himself, and once he was on board the *Electric* could speed off to sea, where he could be told the past life of Silas Toronthal, and Sava's image become effaced by the remembrance of his father's wrongs.

Such was the doctor's very simple plan of campaign. Two or three days more, and the work would be accomplished; Pierre would be separated for ever from Sava Toronthal.

Next day, the 9th of June, there arrived a letter from Point Pescade. It reported that there was nothing new at the house in the Stradone, and that Point Pescade had seen nothing of Pierre since the day he had gone to Gravosa twelve hours after the schooner sailed. He had not left Ragusa, and remained at home with his mother. Point Pescade supposed—and he was not wrong in doing so—that the departure of the *Savarena* had brought about this change in his habits, for as soon as he had found her gone he had gone home looking the picture of despair.

The doctor decided to write next day and invite Pierre Bathory to join him immediately at Cattaro.

But something very unexpected happened to change his plans and allow chance to intervene and lead to the same end.

About eight o'clock in the evening the doctor was on the wharf at Cattaro when the mail steamer *Saxonia* was signalled.

The *Saxonia* came from Brindisi, where she had put in to take on board a few passengers. She was bound for Trieste, calling at Cattaro, Ragusa, and Zara, and the other ports on the Austrian coast of the Adriatic.

The doctor was standing near the gangway along which the people came ashore, when in the twilight his attention was monopolized by one of the travellers whose luggage was being brought off to the wharf.

The man was about forty, of haughty even impudent bearing. He gave his orders loudly; and was evidently one of those persons who even when polished show that they have been badly brought up.

"That fellow!—Here—at Cattaro!"

The passenger was Sarcany. Fifteen years had elapsed since he had acted as accountant in Zathmar's house. With the exception of his clothes he was still the adventurer we saw in the streets of Trieste at the beginning of this story. He wore an elegant travelling suit with a dust coat

of the latest fashion, and his trunks with their many mountings showed that the old Tripolitan-broker was accustomed to make himself comfortable.

For fifteen years Sarcany had lived a life of pleasure and luxury, thanks to the fortune he had acquired from his share of Count Sandorf's wealth. How much was there left of it? His best friends, if he had any, would have been puzzled to say. He had a look of preoccupation, of anxiety even, the cause of which was difficult to discover behind the mask with which he concealed his true disposition.

"Where does he come from? Where is he going?" asked the doctor who did not lose sight of him.

Where he had come from was easily ascertained by asking the purser of the *Saxonia*. The passenger had come on board at Brindisi. Did he come from Upper or Lower Italy? They did not know. In reality he came from Syracuse. On receipt of the telegram from the Moor he had instantly left Sicily for Cattaro.

For it was at Cattaro that the woman was waiting to meet him, her mission at Ragusa having apparently come to an end.

The Moor was there, on the wharf, waiting for the steamer. The doctor noticed her, he saw Sarcany walk up to her, he heard the words she said to him in Arabic, and he understood them,—

"It was time!"

Sarcany's reply was a nod. Then after seeing his luggage passed by the custom-house officer, he went off with the Moor towards the right so as to go outside the town.

The doctor hesitated for a moment. Was Sarcany going to escape him? Ought he to follow him?

Turning round he saw Cape Matifou who was standing gaping at the *Saxonia's* passengers. He beckoned to him, and he was at his side in an instant.

"Cape Matifou," said he, pointing to Sarcany who was walking away, "do you see that man?"

"Yes."

"If I tell you to carry him off will you do so?"

"Yes."

"And you will give him something to prevent his getting away if he resists?"

"Yes."

"Remember I want him alive!"

"Yes."

Cape Matifou was a man of few words, but he had the merit of speaking to the point. The doctor could depend upon him. What he received the order to do, he would do.

The Moor could be seized, gagged, thrown aside in any corner, and before she could give the alarm Sarcany would be on board the *Electric*.

The darkness, though it was not very profound, would facilitate matters.

Sarcany and the Moor continued their walk round the town without noticing that they were being watched and followed. They did not yet speak to each other. They did not wish to do so until they reached some quiet place where they could be safe from interruption. They reached the south gate-opening on the road which leads from Cattaro to the mountains on the Austrian frontier.

At this gate is an important market, a bazaar well known to the Montenegrins. Here they have to transact their business, for they are not allowed to enter the town except in very-limited numbers and after having left their weapons behind them. On the Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday of each week the mountaineers come down from Niegons or Cettinge, having walked for five or six-hours carrying eggs, potatoes, poultry, and even faggots of considerable weight.

This was a Thursday. A few groups whose business had not finished till late had remained in the bazaar intending to pass the night there. There were about thirty of these mountaineers, moving about and chatting and disputing, some stretched on the ground to sleep, others cooking before a coal fire a small sheep impaled on a wooden spit in Albanian fashion.

To this place, as though it was well-known to them, came Sarcany and his companion. There it would be easy for them to talk at their ease, and even remain all night without having to go in search of a lodging. Since her arrival at Cattaro the Moor had not troubled herself about another lodging.

The doctor and Cape Matifou followed them in, one after the other. Here and there a few fires were smouldering and giving but little light. The doctor regretted that he had not put his project into execution on his way from the wharf. But it was now too late. All that could be done was to wait till an opportunity presented itself.

In any case the boat was moored behind the rocks less than 200 yards from the bazaar, and about two cable-lengths away lay the *Electric* with a small light at the bow to show where she was moored.

Sarcany and the Moor took up their position in a dark corner near a group of mountaineers already asleep. There they could talk over their business without being understood, if the doctor wrapped in his travelling cloak had not joined the group without attracting their attention. Matifou concealed himself as well as he could and waited ready to obey orders.

Sarcany and his companion spoke in Arabic, thinking that no one in that place could understand them. They were mistaken, for the doctor was there. Familiar with all the dialects of Africa and the East, he lost not a word of their conversation.

"You got my telegram at Syracuse?" said the Moor.

"Yes, Namir," answered Sarcany, "and I started next day with Zirone."

"Where is Zirone?"

"Near Catania, organizing his new-gang."

"You must get to Ragusa to-morrow and you must see Silas Toronthal."

"I'll be there, and I'll see him! You have not made a mistake, Namir? It was time."

"Yes! the banker's daughter!"

"The banker's daughter!" said Sarcany in such a singular tone that the doctor could hardly prevent himself from giving a start.

"Yes! His daughter!" answered Namir.

"What? Does he allow her to be made love to and without my permission!"

"Are you surprised, Sarcany? Nothing is more certain nevertheless! But you will be still more surprised when you hear who wishes to be the husband of Sava Toronthal!"

"Some ruined gentleman anxious for her father's millions!"

"No!" replied Namir. "But a young man of good birth, and no money!"

"And the name of this fellow?"

"Pierre Bathory."

"Pierre Bathory!" exclaimed Sarcany. "Pierre Bathory marry the daughter of Silas Toronthal."

"Be calm, Sarcany. That the daughter of Silas Toronthal and the son of Stephen Bathory are in love with each other is no secret from me! But perhaps Silas Toronthal does not know it."

"Does he not know it?"

"No! And besides he would never consent."

"I do not know," answered Sarcany. "Toronthal is capable of anything—even of consenting to this marriage if it could quiet his conscience, supposing he has a conscience after these fifteen years. Fortunately here I am ready to spoil his game, and to-morrow I shall be at Ragusa."

"Good!" said Namir, who seemed to have a certain ascendancy over her companion.

"The daughter of Silas Toronthal marries nobody but me—you understand, Namir, and with her I will get out of my difficulties again."

The doctor had heard all he wanted. It mattered not what else Sarcany had to say to the Moor.

A scoundrel coming to claim a scoundrel's daughter! Heaven had indeed intervened in the work of human justice! Henceforth there was nothing to fear for Pierre, whom this rival was to set aside. There was no use, then, in summoning him to Cattaro, or in attempting to carry off the man who wished to be Toronthal's son-in-law.

"May the wretches marry amongst themselves and become all the same family!" said the doctor. "And then we shall see!"

He left, and beckoned to Matifou to follow him. Matifou had not asked why the doctor wished him to walk off with the *Saxonia's* passenger, and he did not ask why the attempt was postponed.

The next day, June 10th, at Ragusa, the doors of the principal drawing-room at the house in the Stradone were thrown open about half-past eight in the evening and a servant announced in a loud tone,—

"Mr. Sarcany."

CHAPTER IX.

COMPLICATIONS.

FOURTEEN years had elapsed since Silas Toronthal had left Trieste to take up his residence at Ragusa. Being of

Dalmatian birth nothing could be more natural than that when he retired from business he should return to his native land.

The traitors had kept their secret well. The price of their treachery had been duly paid. And thereby a handsome fortune fell to the banker and his old Tripolitan correspondent.

After the execution of the two prisoners in the fortress of Pisino, after the flight of Count Mathias Sandorf, who had found his death in the waves of the Adriatic, the sentence had been completed by the seizure of their possessions. Of the house and small estate belonging to Ladislas Zathmar nothing remained—not even enough to yield a living to his old servant. Of Stephen Bathory's possessions nothing remained, for he had no fortune and the lessons he gave produced his only income. But the castle of Artenak and its rich dependencies, the neighbouring mines, and the forests on the northerly slopes of the Carpathians were of considerable value. They were divided into two parts, one of which was sold to pay the informers, and the other was placed under sequestration to be restored to the count's heiress when she had attained her eighteenth year. If the child died before then her share was to revert to the State.

The two quarters given to the informers amounted to a little over 1,500,000 florins; and with this huge sum they could do as they pleased.

At the outset the accomplices made up their minds to separate. Sarcany did not care to remain with Toronthal; and the banker had no wish to continue his business relations with him. And so Sarcany left Trieste with Zirone, who not having left him in adversity was not the man to leave him in prosperity. Both disappeared and the banker heard nothing about them for some time. Where had they gone? Probably to some large European city where people did not bother themselves about a man's origin providing he was rich, and cared nothing of how a man had gained his wealth providing he spent it amongst them.

The banker breathed more freely when they left him. He thought he had no more to fear from a man who to a certain extent held him in his power, and who might some time or other use that power. Nevertheless, although Sarcany was rich it was never safe to trust to prodigals of

his species, and if he ran through his money what was to prevent his coming back to his old accomplice?

Six months afterwards Toronthal, having cleared off his difficulties, sold his business, and definitely abandoned Trieste for Ragusa. Although there was nothing to fear from the indiscretion of the governor, who was the only person that knew the part he had played in the discovery of the conspiracy, this seemed the safest course for a man who did not wish to lose reputation, and whom an ample fortune assured an easy life wherever he went.

This resolution to leave Trieste was probably further encouraged by a peculiar circumstance—which will be mentioned later on. This circumstance was known only to himself and his wife, and had, but on one occasion only, brought him into connection with Namir, whom we have seen as acquainted with Sarcany.

It was at Ragusa then that the banker had settled down. He had left it very young without either friends or relations. He had quite dropped out of recollection, and it was as a stranger that he returned to the town which he had not revisited for forty years.

To a rich man appearing under such circumstances Ragusan society gave a hearty welcome. Only one thing was known about him, and that was that he had held a high position at Trieste. The banker sought and found a mansion in the most aristocratic quarter of the town. He started a large establishment and engaged a fresh staff of servants to what he had had at Trieste. He visited and was visited. As no one knew anything of his past life was he not one of those privileged beings who in this world are called happy?

Toronthal did not suffer much from remorse. Had it not been for the fear that some day his abominable treachery would be discovered there would apparently have been nothing to trouble his existence—except his wife who remained a silent but living reproach to him.

For that unhappy woman, honest and straightforward as she was, knew of the hateful scheme that had sent the three patriots to their deaths. A word—escaped from her husband when his affairs were in jeopardy, a hope imprudently expressed that some of Sandorf's money might *help him out of his difficulties*, some signatures he had had *to obtain from his wife*, had drawn from him the *confession of his share in the Trieste conspiracy*.

An insurmountable aversion for the man who was bound to her was the feeling she thereupon experienced—and the feeling was all the keener from her being of Hungarian birth. But as we have said she was a woman of no moral energy. The blow fell on her, and she could not recover from it. Henceforth at Trieste and afterwards at Ragusa she lived apart from her husband, as much as her position permitted. She appeared at the receptions in the house in the Stradone, it was necessary for her to do so, and her husband insisted on it; but when she had played her part as a woman of the world she retired to her apartments. There she devoted herself entirely to the education of her daughter, on whom she had concentrated all her affection, and endeavoured to forget what she knew. To forget, when the man who had acted in this way was living under the same roof with her!

Two years after their removal to Ragusa, the state of things became still more complicated. And if the complication was an annoyance to the banker it was a subject of further grief to his wife.

Madame Bathory, her son and Borik, had also left Trieste to take up their quarters at Ragusa, where they had a few relatives.

Stephen Bathory's widow knew nothing of Silas Toronthal; she did not even know that he and Count Sandorf had ever had business together. *or ante*

But if Madame Bathory did not know the banker, he knew her. To find himself in the same town, to meet her as he passed by, poor, working to educate her child, was anything but agreeable to him. Had Madame Bathory come to Ragusa before he had made up his mind to live there, he would probably have chosen otherwise. But when the widow came to live at her humble house in the Rue Marinella his mansion had already been bought, he had occupied it, and the position had been definitely accepted. It would not have done to change his residence for the third time.

"We get accustomed to everything!" he said to himself. And he resolved to shut his eyes to this permanent witness to his treachery.

But what was only an unpleasantness for the banker was an incessant cause of grief and remorse to Madame Toronthal. Secretly on several occasions she had tried to send help to this widow who had no other wealth than her

work ; but the help was always refused like that of other unknown friends.

Then the position became almost insupportable owing to an occurrence, most unforeseen, almost improbable, and even terrible by the complications it might bring about.

Madame Toronthal had concentrated all her affections on her daughter, who was two and a half years' old when at the end of 1867 her husband came to live at Ragusa.

Sava was now seventeen—a beautiful girl, more of the Hungarian than the Dalmatian type. With her dark abundant hair, and bright glowing eyes set deep beneath a somewhat lofty forehead of “psychic form”—if we can appropriately use the term that chiromnists apply more particularly to the hand—with her well-curved mouth, and sweet complexion and her graceful figure rather above the middle height, she was at least certain of never being passed by with indifference.

But that which was most striking about her was the pensive, serious mien that seemed to show she was ever in search of some long-faded remembrance of something, she knew not what, that at once allured and saddened her. On this account it was that she treated with extreme reserve all those whom she met in her father's house, or out of doors.

She was supposed to be the heiress of an enormous fortune which one day would be entirely her own, and was of course much sought after. But although many eligible individuals were introduced in whom all the social proprieties were duly found, she had always refused, under her mother's advice, to give them the slightest encouragement. Toronthal himself had never alluded to the subject of her marriage. Probably the son-in-law he wanted—more for himself than Sava—had not yet come forward.

To finish this portrait of Sava Toronthal we should note a very marked tendency to admire such acts of virtue or courage as were due to patriotism. Not that she took much interest in politics, but in the recital of all that affected her country, in the sacrifices made for it, and in recent examples by which its history had been made illustrious, she took deep interest. And these sentiments were hardly owing to the accident of her birth—for assuredly *she did not inherit* them from Silas Toronthal—but seemed *to have arisen spontaneously* in her own noble, generous heart.

Would that explain the sympathetic attraction between her and Pierre? Yes! A stroke of ill-luck had intervened in the banker's game, and brought these two young people together. Sava was only twelve years old when one day somebody had said in her presence,—

"There goes the son of a man who died for Hungary!" And that was never effaced from her memory.

Both grew up. Sava thought of Pierre long before he had noticed her. She saw him looking so serious, so thoughtful! But if he was poor he could at least work to be worthy of his father's name—and she did not know the whole story.

We know the rest, we know how Pierre Bathory was in his turn attracted and won by a nature which sympathized completely with his own, and how when the girl knew not her real feelings towards him, the young man already loved her with a profound affection that she was soon to share.

All that concerns Sava will have been said when we have described her position in the family.

Towards her father she had always been most reserved. Never had the banker betrayed the slightest feeling of kindness towards her, never had he greeted his daughter with a caress. This coolness between them arose from a complete want of accord on every subject. Sava had for Toronthal the respect a daughter should have for her father—nothing more. He let her do as she liked, he did not interfere with any of her tastes, he placed no limit on her works of charity which his natural ostentation willingly encouraged. In short, on his part there was indifference; on hers there was, it must be confessed, antipathy or rather aversion.

For Madame Toronthal Sava had quite a different feeling. The banker's wife submitted to her husband's control, although he showed her but little deference, but she was kind and good and worth a thousand times more in the honesty of her life and the care of her personal dignity. She was very fond of Sava. Beneath the young girl's shyness she had discovered her real worth; but the affection she felt for her was rather artificial and modified by a kind of admiration, of respect, and even of fear. The elevation of Sava's character, her straightforwardness, and at certain times her inflexibility, might perhaps explain this strange form of maternal love. However, the girl returned love

for love, and even without the ties of relationship the two would have been deeply attached to each other.

There is therefore nothing to be astonished at in Madame Toronthal being the first to discover what was passing in the mind and heart of Sava. Frequently had the girl spoken of Pierre Bathory and his family without noticing the sorrowful impression that the name made on her mother. And when Madame Toronthal discovered that Sava was in love with the young man,—

“Heaven wills it then !” was all she murmured.

We may imagine what these words meant, but it is somewhat difficult to understand how the love of Sava for Pierre could make amends for the injury done to the Bathory family.

Madame Toronthal having, however, satisfied herself that it was all in accordance with the designs of Providence, had brought herself to think in her pious, trustful heart that her husband would consent to this union of the families, and so without saying anything to Sava she resolved to consult him on the subject.

At the first words his wife uttered, Toronthal flew into a towering rage which he made no effort to control, and she had to retreat to her apartment with the following threat ringing in her ears,—

“Take care, madame ! If ever you dare speak to me again on that subject I will make you repent it.”

And so what Silas Toronthal called “destiny” had not only brought the Bathory family to live in the same town, but had even brought Sava and Pierre to meet and love one another.

Why, it may be asked, so much irritation on the banker’s part ? Had he formed any secret designs on Sava, on her future, that were prejudiced by this complication ? In the event of his treachery being one day exposed, was it not his interest that the consequences should be atoned for as much as possible ? What could Pierre say when he had become Sava Toronthal’s husband ? What could Madame Bathory do ? Assuredly it would be a horrible situation, the victim’s son married to the murderer’s daughter, but it would be horrible for them, not for him, Silas Toronthal !

Yes, but there was Sarcany, of whom there was no news, but whose return was always possible, a return that might lead to further engagements between the accomplices. *He was not the man to forget if fortune turned against him.*

Toronthal was, it need scarcely be said, not without anxiety at what was to become of his old Tripolitan agent. He had had no news from him since he left Trieste, fifteen years ago. Even in Sicily, where Sarcany was most likely to be heard of, all inquiries had proved in vain. But he might come back any day, and hence a constant state of terror for the banker until the adventurer was dead! And the news of his death Toronthal would have received with easily intelligible satisfaction! Perhaps then he would have looked upon the possibility of a marriage with Pierre in a somewhat different light; but at present it was not to be dreamt of.

Toronthal never alluded to the way in which he received his wife when she had spoken to him about Pierre Bathory. He offered her no explanation of his conduct. What he did was to keep a strict watch on Sava, and even to set spies to look after her; and with regard to the young engineer, to behave towards him as haughtily as possible, to turn his head when he met, and to act in every way so as to crush out all hope. And he succeeded only too well in showing that every attempt on his part would be useless.

It was under these circumstances that on the evening of the 10th of June the name of Sarcany was heard across the room in the mansion in the Stradone as the door opened and that individual entered. In the morning Sarcany and Namir had taken the train at Cattaro for Ragusa. Sarcany had gone to one of the chief hotels in the town, dressed himself in the height of fashion, and without losing an hour had hurried round to visit his old friend.

Toronthal welcomed him, and gave orders that they were not to be disturbed. How did he take this visit? Was he master enough of himself to conceal his true feelings at the reappearance? Was Sarcany as imperious and insolent as formerly? Did he remind the banker of promises made and engagements entered into years before? Did they speak of the past, the present, or the future? What they said we know not, for their interview was secret.

But this was its result.

Twenty-four hours afterwards, a rumour was afloat which might well startle society at Ragusa. Every one was talking of the marriage of Sarcany—a wealthy Tripolitan—with Sava Toronthal.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER BLOW.

EVIDENTLY the banker had had to yield to the threats of the man who could destroy him by a word. Neither his wife's prayers nor Sava's horror availed anything against the father who claimed to dispose of his daughter as best suited his convenience.

One word only as to Sarcany's interest in the marriage—an interest he had not thought it worth while to hide from Toronthal. Sarcany was now ruined. The fortune which had been sufficient to help Toronthal out of his difficulties had hardly been enough to keep the adventurer during the fifteen years. Since his departure from Trieste Sarcany had run through Europe, living in the height of extravagance, and the hotels of Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna, and Rome had never had windows enough for him to throw the money through to gratify his fancies. After a career of pleasure he had taken to gambling to finish his ruin, and had visited nearly every famous gaming haunt on the Continent.

Zirone had, of course, been his constant companion, and when the money had been run through they had returned together to the east of Sicily and waited till an opportunity offered to resume the connection with the banker of Trieste. Nothing could be simpler than that he could restore his fortunes by marrying Sava, the sole heiress of the rich Silas Toronthal—who could refuse him nothing.

In fact no refusal was possible, and no refusal was attempted. Perhaps after all between the two men there was still something hidden concerning the problem they were seeking to solve, which the future would reveal!

However, a very clear explanation was required from Sava by her father. What would she do?

"My honour depends on the marriage," said Silas Toronthal, "and the marriage must take place."

When Sava took back the reply to her mother, she nearly fainted in her daughter's arms and burst into tears of despair.

Toronthal had then told the truth!

The wedding was fixed for the 6th of July.

We can imagine what a life had been led by Pierre

during these three weeks. His misery was dreadful. A prey to impotent rage, sometimes he remained at home in the Rue Marinella; sometimes he escaped from the accursed town, and his mother feared he would never return.

What consolation could she offer him? While no marriage was talked of, while Pierre Bathory was repulsed by Sava's father, some hope did remain. But with Sava married came a new abyss—an abyss that could not be bridged. Dr. Antekirtt in spite of his promises had abandoned Pierre. And besides, she asked herself, how could the young lady who loved him, and whose energetic nature she knew, how could she agree to this union? What was the mystery in this house in the Stradone which brought such things about? Pierre would have done better to leave Ragusa to accept the situation which had been offered him abroad, to go far away from Sava if they were going to hand her over to this stranger, this Sarcany! Despair had in truth entered the house which a ray of happiness had brightened but for a few days.

Point Pescade kept constant watch, and was one of the first to discover what was going on.

As soon as he heard of this new marriage between Sava Toronthal and Sarcany he wrote to Cattaro. And as soon as he heard of the pitiable state to which the young engineer was reduced he sent off the news to the doctor.

The only reply was for him to continue his observations, and to keep Cattaro thoroughly informed of all that happened.

As the 6th of July approached Pierre's state became worse. His mother could not keep him quiet. How could they possibly make Toronthal change his plans? Was it not evident from the haste with which it had been declared and fixed that the marriage had been decided on for some time, that Sarcany and the banker were acquaintances of old date, that the "rich Tripolitan" had some peculiar influence over Sava's father?

Pierre Bathory wrote to Toronthal eight days before the date fixed for the wedding. His letter received no reply.

Then Pierre tried to speak to the banker in the street. He did not succeed in meeting him. Pierre then sought him at his house. He was not allowed to cross the threshold. Sava and her mother remained invisible. There was no possibility of communicating with them.

But if Pierre could not see Sava nor her father he very often ran against Sarcany. To the looks of hate with which he greeted him Sarcany replied with looks of disdain. Pierre then thought of insulting him, of provoking him to fight. But why should Sarcany accept a meeting which he had every inducement to refuse?

Six days went by. Pierre in spite of the entreaties of his mother, and the prayers of Borik, left the house in the Rue Marinella on the evening of the 4th of July. The old servant attempted to follow, but soon lost sight of him. Pierre hurried on at a venture, as if he was mad, along the most deserted streets of the town and by the side of the walls.

An hour afterwards they brought him home—dying. He had been stabbed in the upper part of the left lung.

There seemed to be no doubt that in a paroxysm of despair he had committed suicide.

As soon as Point Pescade heard of the misfortune he ran to the telegraph office.

An hour later the doctor received the news at Cattaro.

It would be difficult to describe the grief of Madame Bathory when she found herself in the presence of her son, who had perhaps but a few hours to live. But the mother's energy steeled itself against the woman's weakness. To work, first: to weep, afterwards.

A doctor was sent for. He arrived in a few minutes, he examined the wounded man, he listened to the feeble intermittent breathing, he probed the wound, he bandaged it, he did all that his art told him—but he gave no hope.

Fifteen hours afterwards the case was aggravated by the occurrence of considerable hæmorrhage, and respiration, becoming hardly apparent, threatened soon to end.

Madame Bathory was on her knees by the bedside praying to God not to take away her son. The door opened.

Doctor Antekirtt walked in and approached the bed.

Madame Bathory would have rushed towards him. He stopped her with a gesture.

Then he went to Pierre, and carefully examined him without uttering a word. Then he looked at him long and fixedly. As if some strange magnetic power shot forth from his eyes to the very brain where thought was lingering *for a moment* before it finally left, he seemed to fill that *brain with his own life, with his own will.*



They brought him home—dying. P. 184

Suddenly Pierre half rose towards him. His eyelids lifted. He looked at the doctor. He fell back inanimate.

Madame Bathory threw herself on her son, gave one scream and fainted in Borik's arms.

The doctor closed the eyes of the corpse; then he rose, left the house, whispering as he did so the old phrase from the Indian legend,—

"Death destroyeth not, it only rendereth invisible."

CHAPTER XI.

A MEETING IN THE STRADONE.

THE death made a good deal of noise in the town, but no one suspected that Sarcany and Silas Toronthal were in any way concerned in it.

It was on the morrow, the 6th of July, that the marriage was to take place.

Neither Madame Toronthal nor her daughter heard anything about the death, precautions having been taken by Toronthal and his destined son-in-law to keep it from their ears.

It had been agreed that the wedding should be a very quiet one. As an excuse it was given out that Sarcany's family were in mourning. This was hardly in accordance with Toronthal's usual love of show, but he thought it better that no more fuss than necessary should be made. The newly-married couple were to remain a few days at Ragusa, and then leave for Tripoli, where Sarcany it was said usually lived. There would therefore be no party in the Stradone, either for the reading of the settlements or after the religious service which was to immediately follow the civil ceremony.

During the day, while the last preparations were being made at the Toronthals', two men strolled along the opposite side of the Stradone.

One was Cape Matifou, the other Point Pescade.

The doctor had brought Matifou back with him to Ragusa. His presence was no longer necessary at Catt

and the two friends, the "twins," as Pescade said, were supremely happy at again seeing one another.

As soon as the doctor had reached Ragusa he had made his first appearance in the Rue Marinella, then he had retired to a quiet hotel in the suburb of Plocce, where he waited until the wedding had taken place in furtherance of his plans.

Next morning he had again visited Madame Bathory and helped to put Pierre in his coffin. He had then returned to his hotel, having sent Pescade and Matifou to keep watch on the Stradone.

And although Pescade was all eyes and ears, that did not prevent him from talking.

"I think you are bigger, old Cape!" he said, reaching up to pat his companion's chest.

"Yes, and in better condition!"

"So I felt when you embraced me."

"But how is the play getting on, we were talking about?"

"Oh, the drama? Oh, it's going on, going on! But you see the action is getting complicated."

"Complicated?"

"Yes! It isn't a comedy, it's a drama, and there will be a big fight before the curtain drops—"

Point Pescade stopped suddenly.

A carriage drove up rapidly to Toronthal's house. The gate opened immediately and as it shut Pescade recognized Sarcany in the carriage.

"Yes—lots of fighting," he continued, "and it looks as though it was going to be a great success."

"And the villain?" asked Matifou, who seemed to be more particularly concerned with that personage.

"Well—the villain is triumphant at the present moment, as he always is in a well-built piece! But, patience! Wait for the end!"

"At Cattaro," said Matifou, "I thought I was coming on."

"Coming on the scene?"

"Yes, Point Pescade, yes!"

And Matifou related what had passed at the bazaar at Cattaro, and how his two arms had been requisitioned for a kidnapping which did not take place.

"Good! That was too soon!" replied Point Pescade, *who spoke for the sake of speaking, so to speak, keeping a*

keen look-out right and left of him. "You won't be wanted till the fourth or fifth act! Perhaps you may only have to appear in the last scene! But don't be uneasy! You will make a great success when you do begin! You can reckon on that!"

At this moment a distant murmur was heard in the Stradone where the Rue Marinella ran in.

Point Pescade broke off the conversation abruptly and hurried to the right of Toronthal's house.

A procession was coming along the road to enter the Stradone on its way to the church of the Franciscans, where the funeral service was to be held.

There were few followers at the funeral, and nothing to attract much attention—merely a coffin carried under a black pall.

The procession slowly advanced, when suddenly Point Pescade, stifling an exclamation, seized Cape Matifou's arm.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing! It would take too long to tell you now!"

He had just recognized Madame Bathory, who had resolved to be present at her son's burial.

The Church had not refused its ministrations; and the priest was waiting in the Franciscan chapel to lead the procession to the grave.

Madame Bathory walked behind the coffin, looking into vacancy. She had no longer strength to cry. Her eyes were almost haggard, and sometimes wandered from side to side for a moment to return plunged for a time beneath the pall which hid the coffin of her son.

Borik dragged himself along after her—a pitious sight to see.

Point Pescade felt the tears come into his eyes. Yes! If he had not had to remain on duty at his post he would not have hesitated to join the few friends and neighbours that were following all that was left on earth of Pierre Bathory.

Suddenly as the procession was about to pass Toronthal's mansion the main gates opened. In the courtyard before the steps two carriages stood ready to start. The first came through the gate and turned down the Stradone.

In this carriage Point Pescade saw Silas Toronthal, his wife, and his daughter.

Madame Toronthal, overwhelmed with grief, was seated next to Sava, who looked whiter than her nuptial veil.

Sarcany, accompanied by some relatives or friends, occupied the second carriage.

The wedding and the funeral equally destitute of show ! In both the same grief ! It was frightful !

Suddenly as the first carriage turned out of the gate there was a piercing shriek.

Madame Bathory had stopped, and with her hand pointed to Sava was cursing her !

It was Sava who had shrieked ! She had seen the mother in mourning ! She had understood all they had hidden from her ! Pierre was dead, dead by her and for her, and it was his funeral that was passing as they were taking her to be married !

She fell back fainting. Madame Toronthal, distracted, tried to bring her back to consciousness. In vain ! She scarcely breathed !

Toronthal could not restrain a gesture of anger. But Sarcany, who had hurried to her side, gave no sign of his annoyance.

Under these circumstances it was impossible to attend before the registrar, and the order was given to return to the house, of which the big gates shut with a clang.

Sava, carried to her room, was laid on her bed without having moved. Her mother knelt by her side, and a physician was summoned in all haste. During this time the funeral continued its progress to the Franciscan church, and then after the service it went on to the cemetery.

Point Pescade saw that the doctor ought at once to know what had happened.

Saying to Matifou, " Stop here and watch " — he ran off to the Plocce.

While Pescade told his story the doctor remained silent.

" Have I exceeded my right ? " he said to himself. " No ! Have I struck one who is innocent ? Yes, certainly ! But she is the daughter of Silas Toronthal ! "

Then he turned to Pescade.

" Where is Cape Matifou ? "

" In front of Toronthal's house. "

" I want you both this evening. "

" At what time ? "

" Nine o'clock. "

" *Where shall we be ?* "

" *At the cemetery gates.* "

Point Pescade instantly returned to Matifou, who had not left his post.

That evening about eight o'clock the doctor, enveloped in an ample cloak, went for a walk towards the harbour of Ragusa. At the angle of the wall on the left he reached a small creek running up among the rocks a little above the harbour.

The place was quite deserted. Neither houses nor boats were near. The fishing craft never came there to anchor for fear of the numerous reefs which lay round the creek.

The doctor halted, looked round him, and uttered a peculiar cry which had doubtless been agreed upon beforehand. Almost immediately a sailor appeared, and approaching him, said,—

"At your orders, sir!"

"The boat is there, Pazzo?"

"Yes, behind the rock."

"With all the men?"

"All."

"And the *Electric*?"

"Farther away to the northward, about three cables away outside the creek."

And the sailor pointed to a long grey tube just visible in the gloom, but without a light of any kind to indicate its presence.

"When did she arrive from Cattaro?"

"Hardly an hour ago."

"And she was not seen?"

"No! she came along by the reefs."

"Pazzo, see that no one leaves his post, and wait for me here all night if necessary."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The seaman returned to the boat which was indistinguishable among the rocks.

Dr. Antekirtt remained for some time on the beach, waiting probably for the darkness to increase. Sometimes he would stride along for a minute. Then he would stop. And then with folded arms, silent and motionless, he would look out over the Adriatic as if telling it his secrets.

The night was moonless, and starless. The land breeze that rises with the evening and lasts but an hour or two had now lulled until it could scarcely be felt. A few thick clouds almost covered the sky except in the west where

the last streaks of the sunset gave a feeble light that was swiftly fading.

"Now!" said the doctor.

And returning towards the town he kept outside the wall all the way to the cemetery.

There before the gate were Point Pescade and Cape Matifou hidden under a tree so as not to be seen in the shadow.

The cemetery was closed at this time of night. A light had just been extinguished in the gatekeeper's lodge. No one was expected there again before the morning.

The doctor seemed to know the plan of the cemetery. And it also appeared that he had no intention of entering by the gate. What he was going to do was to be done in secret.

"Follow me!" he said to Point Pescade and his companion as they came to meet him.

And the three silently crept along the slope that runs at the foot of the exterior wall.

After some ten minutes of this work the doctor stopped, and pointing to a breach caused by a recent fall of the wall said,—

"Through."

He glided through the breach. Point Pescade and Matifou followed him.

The darkness was profound beneath the large trees that overshadowed the tombs. But without hesitation the doctor went down one path and then turned off into another leading to the upper part of the cemetery. Some birds of the night disturbed by his presence flew backwards and forwards overhead, but not another living thing lurked round the gravestones scattered on the turf.

Soon the three stood in front of what looked like a small chapel, with the gate left unfastened.

The doctor pushed back the gate; and then pressing the button of a small electric lantern he threw on the light, but so that it could not be seen from without.

"Enter," said he to Matifou.

Cape Matifou entered and found himself facing a wall on which were three marble tablets.

On one of these tablets, the centre one, he read,—

"STEPHEN BATHORY,
1867."

The tablet to the left bore no inscription ; that to the right was soon to have one.

"Take away that slab," said the doctor.

Cape Matifou easily removed the slab, which had not yet been fixed down. He laid it on the ground, and a bier was seen at the bottom of a cavity in the wall.

There was the coffin containing the body of Pierre Bathory.

"Bring out that coffin," said the doctor.

Cape Matifou pulled out the coffin without any help from Point Pescade, heavy though it was, and after lifting it outside the chapel he placed it on the ground.

"Take this," said the doctor, handing Pescade a screw-driver, "and get the lid off that coffin."

In a few minutes it was done.

The doctor moved aside the white garments with his hand, and placing his head to the body seemed to listen for the beating of the heart.

Then he rose.

"Lift out that body," said he to Cape Matifou.

Matifou obeyed, and neither he nor Pescade made the slightest objection, although such an exhumation was against the law.

When the body of Pierre Bathory was laid on the grass Cape Matifou wrapped it up again in its winding-sheet, and over it the doctor threw his mantle. The coffin was then screwed down, and returned to the cavity, and the tablet placed over it as before.

The doctor broke the current of his electric lantern and the darkness became profound again.

"Take up that body," said he to Cape Matifou.

Matifou lifted it in his arms as if it had been the body of a child. Then led by the doctor and followed by Point Pescade he regained the cross-path leading to the breach in the wall.

Five minutes later they were through the breach and on their way to the shore.

Not a word was spoken ; but if the obedient Cape Matifou thought no more than a machine, what a succession of ideas crowded through the active brain of Point Pescade !

In their journey from the cemetery to the shore they had met nobody. But as they approached the creek where the *Electric's* boat was waiting for them, they saw a coast-guardsmen walking about the rocks.

They continued on their way without troubling themselves about his presence.

Again the doctor uttered his peculiar cry, and the sailor came up from the boat which remained invisible.

At a sign Cape Matifou went down behind the rocks and was about to step into the boat.

At this moment the coastguardsman hurried up, and just as they were entering the boat he asked,—

“Who are you?”

“People who can give you your choice between twenty florins, cash down, and a slap in the face from that gentleman”—pointing to Matifou—“also cash down!”

The coastguardsman did not hesitate: he took the twenty florins.

A moment afterwards the boat had vanished in the darkness. Five minutes later it was alongside the *Electric*. It was hoisted on board. The silent engines were started, and the launch was off to sea.

Matifou bore the body below and laid it on a couch in the saloon, from which not a light-port allowed a ray to escape through the hull.

The doctor was left alone with the corpse. He bent over it, kissed the pallid forehead, and said,—

“And now, Pierre, awake!”

Immediately, as if he had only been asleep, Pierre opened his eyes.

A look of aversion stole over his face when he recognized the doctor.

“You!” he murmured. “You who abandoned me!”

“I! Pierre!”

“But who are you then?”

“A dead man—like you!”

“A dead man—?”

“I am Count Mathias Sandorf!”

END OF PART I.

Good



morning

HAVE YOU
USED
PEARS' SOAP?